POLEMICAL PAIN

Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism

MARGARET ABRUZZO

VISIT…

Polemical Pain

New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History

Jeffrey Sklansky, SERIES EDITOR

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Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism

Margaret Abruzzo

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Introduction

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Americans and Europeans recoiled from the infliction of pain with a depth of disgust unknown to their ancestors. Earlier generations had not enjoyed pain, but their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century descendants turned vast amounts of moral energy against it. They created a cause. Or, rather, they created countless causes. Reformers threw themselves with great vigor into a growing array of movements that aimed to ease pain or to abolish its infliction. Over the course of a century, this new humanitarianism spawned movements to build almshouses, reform prisons, eliminate judicial torture, end capital punishment, and, most famously, abolish slavery.[1] Reactions against corporal punishment in the navy, schools, and prisons spared the bodies of unruly sailors, young miscreants, and hardened criminals. Even animals benefited; in 1824 British activists founded a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and American reformers followed suit in 1866. Medical advances joined the assault against pain; the 1846 introduction of ether changed operating rooms from scenes of indescribable agony to stages for painless miracles (an achievement meriting an 1868 monument in the Boston Public Garden).[2] Within a

century the new humanitarian sensibility had made immoral the unnecessary infliction of pain.

The rise of humanitarian activism grew out of a slow transformation in moral thinking about the meaning of pain; the deliberate infliction of pain began to spark moral outrage. Pain had once counted as an inevitable woe. Well-heeled sufferers could turn to medical practitioners for some relief, but pain was inescapable, something that everyone had to accept and endure.[3] But while no one could avoid pain, Christianity provided a framework for interpreting it. Pain entered the world through the sin of Adam and Eve and thus bespoke the universal estrangement between God and creation. Yet suffering also healed that breach; salvation entered the world through Christ's agony on the cross. Christians even described pain as God's loving discipline, reminding themselves that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."[4] Pain could point to any number of things: the fallen state of humanity, punishment from God, atonement for sin. The experience of suffering thus mattered a great deal spiritually, and pain's role in the spiritual drama of salvation dwarfed suffering's moral meaning. The mere infliction of pain did not inspire widespread moral condemnation; indeed, pain as punishment provided a crucial weapon in the arsenal of justice.[5] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, pain became charged with new moral significance. Instead of viewing pain as the unchanging result of the fall of Adam and Eve, moralists increasingly attributed pain to specific human choices. And those choices became morally suspect. Newfangled humanitarians treated pain as a problem resulting from human action or inaction, one that human beings could and should solve.

At first glance this transformation in American moral thinking looks deceptively simple. Indeed, much of the power of this novel moral language rested on the apparent simplicity of moral claims about pain, on the assumption that such claims are self-evident to all decent human beings.[6] Humanitarianism denounced cruelty and praised those who sacrificed personal interests to relieve the suffering of others. Yet the seeming transparency of the moral imperative to ease pain belied a far more complex and fluid set of attitudes that contributed to this sensibility. Even as Americans revolted against pain, they did not treat all pain as morally equivalent. Therein lay the fault lines. The mere existence of pain did not (and does not) ineluctably trigger humanitarian outrage. If banal, the expression "no pain, no gain" still testifies to a lingering suspicion that some pain serves useful purposes. But

even for humanitarians who dreamed of a world without pain, the attempt to banish all pain would baffle even the most dedicated. Humanitarianism is necessarily selective; it cannot be reduced to an instinctive desire to end every instance of pain.

Instead, humanitarianism drew on a medley of interconnected assumptions. It depended on the belief that pain fell under human control and that people individually bore some measure of moral responsibility for the pain of others. But humanitarianism also depended on shifting assumptions about what constituted a sufficient reason to inflict pain, as well as on changing beliefs about the moral or spiritual value of *experiencing* suffering. Humanitarianism sprang from the confluence of these transformations in moral thinking: growing moral concern about tolerating unnecessary pain, shifting perceptions of the usefulness of pain and suffering, and new ways of drawing lines of moral responsibility for pain.[7] These changes, though related, tugged humanitarians in different directions. Beneath the placid surface of humanitarianism, these streams of thinking churned together in often unexpected and surprising courses. The new outlook changed ways of thinking about many things but rarely in single or stable ways, since the meanings of humaneness were themselves uncertain and contested.

Despite our abundant interest in how humanitarian thinking inspired reformers and social critics to wipe away the tears of sufferers, we know little about humanitarianism's actual functioning as a moral language, especially in its formative years. Historians usually tell the story of humanitarianism as a narrative of rising movements and moral revolutionaries, detailing the slow progress of humanitarian ideas against the status quo. But as moral concern about pain actually shifted from abstract denunciation to practical application, humaneness generated controversy. Like all revolutionaries, humanitarians called forth enemies. In an age revolted by physical pain, who would join the ranks in favor of torture, cruelty, and oppression? Yet each movement drew critics; the rise of humanitarianism spawned as much controversy as agreement. Some teachers clung to their canes, while southern congressmen fought to retain flogging in the navy. Animal lovers courted mockery, and physicians accepted the promises of ether haltingly. The most famous humanitarian movement—to abolish slavery—succeeded only after a bloody war. Too often we read these opponents of reforms out of the story of humanitarianism or treat them as mere upholders of the status quo, untouched by the swell of new ideas.

This book began in my puzzlement over these opponents of humanitarian reforms. What made them willing to defend pain? How did these critics of reform justify their positions to a society disgusted by unnecessary pain? How did they understand themselves vis-à-vis the flood of humanitarian sentiment washing over American culture? To answer these questions, I turned to the debate over the cruelty—or humaneness—of American slavery. Nearly a century and a half after its abolition, slavery strikes us as one of the most flagrant violations of humanitarian sensibility; we see slavery as not only cruel but self-evidently cruel. In 2008 the US House of Representatives apologized for the "fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery."[8] Likewise, historians point to the rise of a new humanitarian sensibility to explain antislavery, and antebellum abolitionists relied heavily on moral doubts about cruelty to rally opposition to slavery.[9] Given the centrality of cruelty in our understanding of slavery, analyzing the place of humaneness in the slavery debate provided me with a way to explore the perplexing opposition to humanitarianism. Yet, very quickly, the complexity of humanitarianism revealed itself. I soon realized that I could not neatly divide early Americans into humanitarians or antihumanitarians. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, humanitarianism not only sparked opposition to slavery; it also transformed how slavery's supporters defended the institution as morally legitimate.

In 1750 Thomas Bacon, an Anglican minister in Talbot County, Maryland, exhorted his congregation to take seriously owners' duties to the people they enslaved. But he had no intention of undermining slavery. God had designed slavery for a particular purpose: to give the enslaved the hope of eternal salvation. Bacon asked for no "ease" for enslaved laborers; conversion would not bring emancipation.[10] Bacon had no gripe with the principle of slavery, but he warned that masters often sinfully ignored the religious education of enslaved blacks, consigning them to an eternity of unspeakable misery. This, Bacon charged, was a dreadful dereliction of duty and showed rank ingratitude. Having deprived blacks of earthly happiness, slaveholders owed them a chance at eternal bliss. Given the misery of slavery, owners must help "these poor People" to "*receive* their *good Things* in Heaven, since it is plain they cannot enjoy them upon Earth."[11] Bacon did not doubt the divine purpose of slavery, nor did he doubt that slavery entailed suffering.

Bacon frankly told enslaved laborers that they faced miserable, unenviable lives, but he cared far more about their future misery in the fires of hell.

Unlike others who risked their souls, slaves would enjoy no earthly pleasure on the road to hell. "What a terrible thing it would be," Bacon reminded them, "after all your labours and sufferings in this life, to be turned into Hell in the next life" and "a far worse slavery."[12] True, God had not willed this woe, but slaveholders' self-interest had distorted His purposes. Earthly life would not be happy.[13] If the enslaved wanted heavenly happiness, they needed to acquiesce in earthly misery, enduring even unjust punishments. They had "no remedy in this world," but God would punish wicked masters and reward faithful slaves in the next.[14] Christlike patience under suffering would bring "exceeding great glory hereafter."[15] Earthly suffering paled next to eternal bliss; misery turned into tragedy only when followed by the torments of hell.

In the mid-eighteenth century, few people doubted that the enslaved faced a lifetime of suffering. But, like Thomas Bacon, most white colonists did not view the pain that enslaved people endured as a moral indictment of slavery. Slave suffering was something to take for granted, something perhaps to regret but usually to ignore. Slavery's defenders often assumed that slaves were miserable but also that God had distributed pleasure and pain unequally on earth. Heaven would remedy inequity. Colonial slaveholders readily admitted that captives chafed under whips and chains, though they also assumed their own right to be severe. Before the American Revolution, slaveholders generally presumed that, given the opportunity, most enslaved blacks would flee in pursuit of happiness.[16] The question of whether slavery produced suffering had little moral bearing on the slavery question.

A century later the world had changed. In 1849 the Baptist State Convention of Alabama offered a $200 prize for the best essay on the topic "Duties of Christian Masters to Their Servants." In 1851 it published the three winning essays, by the Reverend Holland Nimmons McTyeire of New Orleans; the Reverend C. F. Sturgis of Greensboro, Alabama; and the Reverend A. T. Holmes of Haynesville, Georgia. In strikingly similar pieces each warned against overworking "servants" and counseled slaveholders to provide sharp tools to ease enslaved laborers' work. Owners owed their human property sufficient time for sleep and relaxation, comfortable clothing, substantial and nourishing food, medical care, clean houses, and comfortable, warm mattresses. Owners should protect families and encourage devoted marriages. Though insisting on order and firm discipline, the writers cautioned against severe punishments or even moderate ones inflicted in passion. Holmes explained that "a kind word, a pleasant look, a little arrangement for his

comfort, assures him that there is one who cares for him: and, notwithstanding he goes forth to his daily labor, and toils at his daily task, his heart is light, his song is cheerful, and he seeks his humble couch at night, in the happy consciousness that his *master is his friend*. Such is the enviable lot of many servants in our '*sunny south*.' "[17]

Slavery, once assumed burdensome and pitiable, had become an "enviable lot," and the severe master morphed into the slave's friend. The three ministers still demanded religious instruction, but they did not assume that eternal happiness compensated for earthly misery. Enslaved laborers deserved earthly comforts. Slavery, no longer right *despite* suffering, became right *because* it made the enslaved happy. Thomas Bacon saw no incompatibility in pitying blacks' pain while dismissing its importance. A century later slaveholders could not so easily do so. Instead, they argued that slavery, not emancipation, was truly humane, and they grounded the morality of slavery in its supposed humanity. Not only was slavery benevolent in itself, but emancipation was cruel: freedom in poverty was purely nominal, a "freedom to starve."[18]

The metamorphosis of the slave from a tragic figure to a contented one in proslavery discourse sprang from shifting conceptions of the moral meaning of pain, the same shifts in moral thinking that grounded antislavery. Analyzing proslavery claims thus forces us to rethink our assumptions about the relationship between humanitarianism and antislavery. Although proslavery claims to humaneness now seem patently absurd, they once mattered a great deal. Proslavery writers failed to convince later generations of their humanitarian credentials, but they had far more success in persuading contemporary white Americans that compassion did not dictate abolition—and perhaps even forbade it. Their arguments once posed serious challenges to antislavery.

Proslavery claims of humaneness also forced slavery's opponents to rethink their own rhetorical strategies. The prominence of cruelty in antislavery rhetoric owed much to proslavery depictions of slavery as benevolent. We have tended to take this sort of antislavery rhetoric for granted. Based on what we know about the *actual* cruelty of slavery, a strategy of highlighting cruelty—the needless and deliberate infliction of pain—seems obvious and natural. Yet we should not take this as a given.[19] Far from eagerly embracing this strategy, many of slavery's critics harbored serious doubts about the prudence of this approach. Proslavery arguments, however, forced critics to prove, with ever-more graphic detail, the cruelties of slavery. In their drive to

defeat proslavery claims, abolitionists swallowed their qualms about fixating on the treatment of enslaved people rather than on the principle of slavery.

Humanitarianism changed Americans' attitudes about many things, but rarely did it do so in a simple or stable way. Moralists insisted that people behave humanely, but what, precisely, did this mean? Though revulsion from pain was obvious, its implications were not; the meanings of humaneness were contested. The struggle over slavery was not simply a battle between humanitarians and antihumanitarians but a war to mark out the meaning of humaneness. In the end the antislavery victors defined humanitarianism. But we can only comprehend the moral meanings of pain, benevolence, humanity, and their complicated history when we understand the multiple, contradictory uses made of this moral concern. From the earliest days, humanitarianism and benevolence were profoundly contested and malleable categories, not clear programs for reform.[20]

Failing to recognize this unsettled multiplicity leaves the mistaken impression that moral concern with pain led ineluctably into what we now think of as humanitarianism.[21] Yet humanitarianism did not unfold neatly from some internal logic; the slavery debate played a crucial role in transforming moral ideas. Antislavery and proslavery thought were not stable ideologies that grew solely out of the unique cultural contexts of North and South; instead, they developed in angry dialogue with each other. Slavery's defenders and critics shaped and reshaped their claims not in isolated studies or secluded plantations but in dynamic debate. Proslavery and antislavery polemicists rarely spoke to each other, but they thought a great deal about how to defeat each other.[22] The practical workings of the debate and not simply the dictates of intellectual consistency shaped their arguments and theories. I am thus not building a comparative argument; rather, my point is that isolating one side of the debate obscures the dynamic character of ideologies. We better understand pro- and antislavery thought—and thus the formation of "humaneness"—by studying this interaction.[23]

To illuminate the contested character of humanitarianism, this book situates proslavery and antislavery claims in the context of a fierce debate over the meaning of pain for slavery. While we know that slavery's defenders argued that slavery protected enslaved blacks from the cruelties of northern capitalism, historians tend (with notable exceptions) to analyze such claims primarily within southern contexts, such as plantation dynamics or a unique slaveholding worldview (such as premodern paternalism). But despite the

significant intellectual differences separating the two sides, proslavery and antislavery conceptions of morality grew from similar intellectual roots. Indeed, as historians have noted, notions of benevolence were entirely compatible with modern economics. Proslavery and antislavery arguments both depended on related, relatively modern shifts in the moral status of pain rather than on diametrically opposed intellectual assumptions about the nature of modernity, economics, or morality.[24] Slavery's critics and defenders shared common patterns of moral thinking, reinforced by common educational practices. Many Southerners trekked north for college—most notably to the College of New Jersey (later Princeton)—where pro- and antislavery students took the same moral philosophy classes. Moral philosophy textbooks, not simply students, crossed the Mason-Dixon Line.[25] Northerners and Southerners not only read the same Bible and prayed to the same God; they also built upon similar frameworks of moral understanding.[26] Yet similar premises led to mutually exclusive conclusions about the meaning of humaneness. What is remarkable is how differently the competing sides used a common intellectual heritage. The most intense fights often occur between people who share basic moral presuppositions—and thus share a sense of what is morally at stake. The differences between proslavery and antislavery ideologies were significant, but these differences stand in sharper relief when we expose the intellectual similarities.

The changing place of cruelty in moral thinking, however, can only be fully understood by looking beyond public rhetoric and the abstractions of moral philosophy to explore the battle within individual self-understandings. Debates about morality stand at the intersection of the public and private, the political and the personal. Moral debates matter so much, in part, because of the conceptual and practical difficulty of detaching the personal and private from the public and political. Americans fought about morality in moral philosophy texts, in the halls of Congress, in polemical pamphlets, and in their private correspondence and diaries. Public battles over morality ramified into individual self-understandings. Shifts in moral thinking create conflicts between impersonal ethical codes and personal self-images and practices. Certainly, huge gaps can separate human beings' moral values and their practices, and in this tug-of-war values can lose. And economic interest tugs particularly powerfully in this contest. Yet moral ideas matter. Moral ideas cannot force individuals to change their behavior, but they can force individuals to find new ways of thinking about that behavior. Most people, after all,

want to see themselves as good.[27] (And for generations of believers who thought that their eternal salvation bore some relation to their earthly behavior, the stakes were high.) People thus seek ways to ease tension between their behavior and moral ideals, whether by rethinking their ideas, changing their actions, or confessing their hypocrisy. As moral ideas and attitudes shift, those shifts require people to find new ways to reconcile their behavior with their moral ideas.

The rise of humaneness thus worked to reshape the self-images of both slavery's critics and slaveholders, but the tension particularly agitated slaveholders, because their behavior stood on trial. For them slavery was not simply a debate or an abstract moral question but also a lived institution; arguments about the humaneness of slave treatment hung over their daily behavior. The point is not that slaveholders felt guilty about whipping human beings; rather, slaveholders had to work out the tension between the demands of humaneness and practices that others denounced as cruel.[28] This book is not about how slaveholders *actually* treated enslaved laborers but about the moral significance that they and others attached to that treatment.[29] Although this rhetoric often bore a tenuous relation to the realities of slaveholding, it cannot be ignored, since it shaped (albeit indirectly) how slaveholders interpreted their interactions with the people they held in slavery. Those interactions, in turn, helped to shape (again, often indirectly) slaveholders' private self-understanding and public arguments. The resistance, manipulation, or accommodation of the enslaved affected slaveholders' ability to maintain their benevolent self-images. Slaveholders did not simply live in a world that they made, that slaves made, or even one that they made together. Slaveholders operated in a world shaped by shifting moral assumptions and a fierce moral debate that extended beyond the South. Their plantation records, letters, and diaries do not naively recount how they treated enslaved people; slaveholders wrote with full awareness of the stakes of that treatment in the world of morality and public debate. The private rhetoric of slaveholders molded their self-understandings and justified their behavior to themselves and, indirectly, the world.

Moral condemnations of inflicting pain pervaded the debate over slavery, and the need to defend one's position in terms of humaneness proved critical, not only to political fortunes but also to individual consciences. The concern struck at the heart of slaveholders' and their critics' moral identities. Both sides fought fiercely to establish their own humanity, not only through politi-

cal pamphlets but also through private letters and diaries. This book thus brings together a wide variety of sources, ranging from formal moral-philosophical treatises to children's books to the scrawled notes of overseers. The fiery rhetoric of the debate can seem overblown, but the stakes were high, and private papers reveal just how important the debate over benevolence was to the self-understanding of both sides.

This book explores the meaning of humanitarianism and the role of humaneness in moral identity. But to understand what the book is about, readers should realize what it is not about. It is not properly about slavery itself. My aim is not to explain the workings of the institution of slavery or the debate surrounding it; instead, I have used the slavery debate as a way to analyze the changing meanings of humaneness. Nor is my goal to provide a comprehensive analysis of the slavery debate or the intellectual worlds of slaveholders or their critics. Focusing on one strand of moral thinking, I have omitted other important factors in the moral analysis of slavery, such as debates over biblical interpretation, well assessed elsewhere.[30] It is not my intention to explain why people chose their positions on slavery. Americans developed their views on slavery for a wide variety of religious, economic, social, cultural, and psychological reasons, and I have not performed a chemistry experiment to isolate the catalyst of abolitionism or proslavery. Instead, the book explores how moral thinking about pain helped confirm or undermine Americans' moral confidence in their positions on slavery. Most important, I do not address the old question of whether slavery was cruel; rather, I ask why the answer mattered so much to early Americans.

My analysis is fundamentally concerned with the development of humanitarian sensibilities, and the slavery debate serves as a matrix within which to examine this development. The book, more precisely, analyzes the moral transformation that made it critical for slaveholders to perceive themselves as kind and compassionate and to banish any hint of cruelty from their self-perceptions. This study helps explain why antislavery polemicists found it essential to dwell on the cruelties of slaveholders in grotesque detail, even as they worried that doing so drew attention away from more fundamental issues of human rights. And, indirectly, this book suggests why the answer to the question of whether slavery was cruel still matters so much to us today.

I have focused on slavery because slavery raises important questions not only about cruelty and humaneness but also about human dignity, rights, and

equality. Slavery thus offers an unusually fruitful case study for understanding the interconnections and tensions between humanitarianism and other moral languages. Slavery used cruelty as a tool to deny Africans and African Americans their human dignity, equality, and rights. Slavery was, in its essence, a dehumanizing institution. The enslaver claimed not only the right to dominate another person and claim his or her labor but also to deny that person the rights enjoyed by free members of society. Slavery, as one leading scholar argues, was a form of social death; it tore the enslaved human being from the ties of kinship and community. Slavery allowed slaves an existence in society only through the mediation of the enslaver. Enslaved people did form rich and meaningful relationships and kinship networks, but slavery denied them the right to protect those relationships with the force of law. Slaves could not make legally binding or legally sanctioned claims on each other; the owner's power trumped spouses' claims on each other or children's claims on their parents.[31] American slavery, which began in the act of capturing and tearing Africans from their homes and families, continued to deny Africans and their descendants the right to maintain ties, as countless enslaved family members learned when they were sold far from their spouses, children, or parents in the domestic slave trade.

Slavery, moreover, dishonored and dehumanized the enslaved in fundamental ways. Aristotle famously believed that there were "natural slaves," people who were suited by nature for enslavement; their inferiority (and subordination) to other human beings was comparable to the inferiority and subordination of the body to the soul or of animals to human beings.[32] American slavery similarly not only defined human beings as property but also tried to reduce them to a status more akin to that of an animal than a person—even though slaveholders only rarely denied that Africans and African Americans were human beings. One prominent historian even suggests that the domestication of animals may have provided an early model for slavery.[33] Likening the enslaved to animals—or, in Aristotle's case, the body—suggested that enslaved people were unfit to govern themselves. Significantly, the likening of slaves to animals or to bodies also served crucial ideological purposes in a society that exalted the spiritual and mental over the physical. The comparison of the enslaved to animals and bodies drew sharp lines between the slave, who lived in a world of physicality, and the slaveholder's pursuit of the aspirations of the mind and soul. In this model,

enslaved people—like animals—were governed by physical pleasures and pains, not reason. Using physical pain to coerce enslaved labor was thus inseparable from the dehumanization of slavery.

Yet the central contradiction of slavery lay in the fact that it never fully succeeded in dehumanizing the enslaved person. The "natural slave" did not actually exist. Slavery entailed an ongoing struggle between the enslaver's attempt to dehumanize the human being and the enslaved person's insistence on his or her essential humanity.[34] The dehumanization of slavery thus necessarily entailed violence—whether actual or threatened—to maintain domination over people who could not be counted on to accept their enslavement as natural. Regardless of the behavior of individual owners, the system of slavery relied on violence; in all slave societies, whipping and other forms of physical abuse were crucial in establishing the power of the enslaver and denying the enslaved person his or her rights.[35] Slavery began in violence, not only in capturing a free person but also in turning a captive into a slave who accepted his or her status—or at least the impossibility of changing it. And enslavement did not end with the original act of capturing someone and breaking his or her will to resist. Enslavement had to be perpetuated through subsequent generations; each new generation must be reenslaved; each individual born into slavery must be forced to accept his or her enslavement. The power of enslavers depended on that violence, whether real or threatened. Pain, as one theorist suggests, destroys a victim's own world and creates a new world in which nothing else is significant but pain—and the end of pain—itself. The "incontestable reality" of pain makes power seem real and incontestable, even though the need to resort to pain shows the unnaturalness and fragility of power.[36] Violence was necessary precisely because enslavement was not natural; violence could not make power legitimate, but it could make it seem real.

Slavery's dependence on cruelty to rob human beings of their dignity, equality, and rights is precisely why slavery is such a useful case study for understanding the intertwined problems of humanitarianism and human rights. Cruelty provided one of the most visible, striking symbols of the wrongs of slavery. Yet, while cruelty was essential to the institution of slavery, it was not the essence of slavery. Within the slavery debate the moral language of humanitarianism both worked with and against other moral languages, especially the languages of human rights, dignity, and equality. By studying the way that Americans fought to define the meaning of humanitari-

anism for slavery—where the meaning seems so obvious today—we can see the complexities and tensions of humanitarian thinking more clearly.

By tracing the growth of objections to cruelty and the effects of this shift on American thought about slavery, this book addresses important questions about the nature and development of humanitarianism. How did humanitarianism actually work as a moral language in practice? More precisely, did humanitarianism have a stable intellectual core? We have mostly assumed that it did and that humanitarianism fed naturally and inevitably into the movements that we now think of as humanitarian. But we have missed the complexity, ambivalence, and contestation at the heart of this shift. By considering the competing, even contradictory, meanings of humaneness within the slavery debate, we can better understand the development and meaning of humanitarianism more broadly.

To address these questions, I explore changes in moral thinking about cruelty and humanity from the early eighteenth century through the beginning of the Civil War. I begin by tracing the slow, meandering development of moral objections to cruelty, the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain. Although historians have challenged our tendency to regard the moral revulsion against pain as instinctive, historians have paid surprisingly little attention to how this moral language developed. Moreover, they also tend to treat humanitarianism as a unitary strain of thinking, rooted in modern challenges to the religious or moral value of pain.[37] The fundamental question thus becomes, "Why did humanitarians start caring about a *particular* kind of pain?" Or, why did they fixate on certain kinds of pain rather than others? In particular, why did people start caring about distant pain?[38] But before we can evaluate the selectivity or breadth of humane concern about pain, we need to step back to reconsider why people paid attention to *any* pain. Humanitarianism was no simple, unmediated reaction to the mere existence of pain, nor was it simply sympathy for the experience of suffering. Nor did humanitarianism develop solely out of a modern rejection of pain.

As humanitarianism developed, it became politicized; my analysis thus progresses to exploring the eruption of serious argument over the nature of humanitarianism within the slavery debate. Humanitarianism did not unfold neatly from an internal logic; the slavery debate played a crucial role in transforming moral ideas. Drawing on shared moral-philosophical categories (particularly sympathy and benevolence), proslavery and antislavery writers articulated starkly opposing visions of humaneness. As abolitionists de-

nounced slavery's cruelty, proslavery writers countered that slavery offered the most humane alternative to cruel freedom. Both sides constructed their moral identities by demonstrating their own humaneness and the other's cruelty.

The debate over slavery's cruelty revealed unrecognized sides of moral categories that remain deeply pertinent in the twenty-first century. These moral categories are more complex than we often acknowledge. As we ponder the grounding of human rights, or the rights and obligations entailed by suffering, we would do well to understand how these moral languages worked in practice in the past. By examining how humanitarianism actually functioned, we can better understand the complex and often ambivalent processes by which our culture made and makes ethical judgments. Too often we assume that moral assumptions unfold into obvious, predetermined moral conclusions; in practice, however, shared moral assumptions lead to widely diverging judgments. Understanding the contestation over the meaning of humanity—and its ability to serve varied, even contradictory, purposes—illuminates our understanding of the role of pain in morality.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

The word *slave* has recently become controversial in historical scholarship. Some scholars now prefer to use "enslaved persons," both to stress that enslavement was a process, not a natural state, and to emphasize the humanity and dignity of the enslaved human being. Other critics of the term *slave* compare it to the word *victim;* both terms downplay the agency and resistance of Africans and African Americans. In contrast, other historians argue that avoiding the term *slave* obscures the actual legal status of slavery or risks glossing over the oppressiveness of the institution. Still others note that slaveholders themselves often disliked the term *slave*, preferring *Negroes* or *servants*. This linguistic challenge reflects the broader difficulty scholars face in conveying the oppressiveness of slavery without falling into the trap of reducing African Americans to the status of helpless, passive victims.[39]

I have used both *slave* and variations of *enslaved* for a variety of reasons. Although the word *slave* jars modern sensibilities, the discomfort that the word provokes is useful, because the word better conveys the tone and meaning of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rhetoric about humaneness.

The heart of this language (and a main thread of this book) is the depiction of enslaved blacks as suffering victims and whites as their protectors or tormentors. As valuable as it is to emphasize the personhood and dignity of enslaved Africans and African Americans, the associations attributed to the word *slave* better capture the complexities and pitfalls of this historical rhetoric. In the image of the slave—especially the image of the slave as a victim of cruelty—the enslaved person was often lost; the rhetoric of humaneness focused not on African Americans' humanity, equality, or dignity but on their ability to suffer pain. Likewise, the language of humaneness emphasized the agency and morality of whites and downplayed the experiences and agency of enslaved blacks. I have thus used both terms: *enslaved* because it reminds readers of the essential humanity and dignity of enslaved people, and *slave* because it better captures the moral ambivalence of a rhetoric that depicted blacks as passive victims.

CHAPTER ONE

Self-Denial, Martyrdom, and the Formation of Quaker Humanitarianism

At first glance eighteenth-century Quakers seem unlikely humanitarians. Pain appalled few early eighteenth-century Americans, but in the young Society of Friends it upset fewer still. Instead of finding suffering repugnant, many eighteenth-century Quakers gloried in the idea (if not the practice) of martyrdom. The Society's theology encouraged members to embrace and even relish the opportunity to testify to the truth by enduring pain patiently. The earliest records of the Society of Friends recounted stories of members who heroically suffered persecution for the sake of their beliefs. Quaker theology also taught Friends that bodies mattered little; the flesh tempted and distracted the soul. Their religion focused on the incorporeal soul and its spiritual destiny, treating the flesh as an obstacle to spiritual fulfillment. Quakers, undismayed by pain and suspicious of bodies, might initially seem unlikely to attack cruelty.

Yet, over the course of the eighteenth century, Quakers did precisely that. Their testimonies paradoxically supported the attack on slaveholding cruelty, precisely by affirming that suffering was either good or irrelevant. Quakers' views of the value of suffering and martyrdom gradually grounded criticisms

of slavery as cruel. Quakers who cared little about pain itself increasingly criticized its *infliction* as unchristian.

Quaker concern about the cruelty of slavery did not begin with moral qualms about bodily pain; instead, Friends addressed the issue of pain only indirectly, through the problem of cruelty. Quakers, like most white Americans, knew that enslaved people suffered, but Quakers also took slave pain for granted. It might inspire a twinge of regret, but few whites invoked the suffering of slaves as a reason in itself to challenge slavery. What would later become the essence of cruelty—the deliberate infliction of unnecessary *pain*—remained peripheral to Quakers' initial moral qualms about cruelty. Instead, denunciations of slavery's cruelty rested on the immoral purposes that inflicting pain served. Antislavery Friends worried more about the worldliness and sinfulness of slaveholders than the pain endured by enslaved laborers. Antislavery Quakers linked slave pain to Quakers' sins, particularly worldliness, abuse of power, and a rejection of Friends' proper role as a "suffering people." They thus categorized this infliction of pain as morally evil.[1] The pain itself was not the point. But over the course of the eighteenth century, Quakers and others broke down the moral neutrality of inflicting pain by persistently associating that pain with Quakers' failure to live morally.

By denouncing their own infliction of pain as cruelty, Quakers helped reshape the meaning of cruelty. In the broader Anglo-American world cruelty lacked a stable, universal meaning. Causing another to suffer did not, by itself, amount to cruelty. Nor was inflicting bodily pain the defining ingredient in seventeenth-century usage of "cruelty." Cruelty turned on the abuse of power, not the abuse of bodies. The moral meaning of pain, violence, and bodily harm depended on the circumstances, and inflicting pain might be entirely legitimate. The same act of torture might count as cruelty, judicial necessity, or well-deserved punishment. Acts of physical violence walked a fine line between "justice" and "cruelty"; the neat distinction turned on context and the identity of the perpetrator, especially in the case of religious violence. Religious violence did not outrage most people—unless it was the violence of their *enemies,* directed at their own religious beliefs. In 1679 an English anti-Catholic broadside could illustrate nearly identical acts but describe one as the evil cruelty of the pope and his minions, while labeling the equally violent acts of the Protestant king as justice. In the sixteenth century Pope Sixtus V wept over the violence done to Catholic martyrs but still authorized its use against Protestants. The purpose, not the harshness, of the

act mattered most.[2] Cruelty described the acts of people who were already labeled wicked and who harmed those who seemed good, innocent, and helpless. Cruelty, in short, described the excessive wickedness or violence of enemies.

In eighteenth-century Quaker circles, the definitions of *suffering* and *cruelty* began to shift in substantial but subtle ways; Quakers began to apply the label of *cruelty* to other Quakers' actions rather than limiting the term to their enemies. As Friends embraced the identity of a suffering people, reformers pointed out that Friends' own sins brought suffering to others. Instead of fixating on their enemies' illegitimate use of violence, Quaker reformers questioned Friends' own use of pain. Now, the deliberate infliction of pain, even perpetrated by Quakers, constituted moral failing. Indeed, not only did Quakers indict fellow Quakers for cruelty; they also paid far more attention to the cruelty of Friends than to that of outsiders. Cruelty came to symbolize moral decay within the broader Society of Friends. Over the long term, Anglo-American concepts of cruelty began to define the deliberate infliction of pain—no matter the perpetrator—as wrong in itself, except when such pain benefited the sufferer (as in surgery).

Quakers' steps toward a new understanding of cruelty were halting, and the definition of *cruelty* remained fluid. At the end of the eighteenth century the shift remained incomplete; Quakers still trained their gaze on the intentions and character of perpetrators, not the experiences or rights of victims. Cruelty occurred not when someone suffered unnecessarily but when one person inflicted pain on another to serve unchristian ends. Cruelty mattered because it distorted the spiritual meaning of suffering. Yet the meaning of cruelty had changed. Quakers gazed not at a religious enemy but at themselves.

Although Quaker concern about slavery was initially limited to Quaker slaveholders and their rejection of Friendly ideals, over the long term Quakers shaped broader critiques of cruelty. Despite believing that pain was either good or irrelevant, Quakers objected to its deliberate infliction. Developments in broader Christianity and moral philosophy that affirmed the value of pleasure and downplayed the meaning of pain might seem likelier breeding grounds for humanitarianism. Indeed, those developments did contribute to humanitarianism. But the competing emphases on martyrdom, self-denial, and the value of suffering exemplified by Quakers (though not exclusive to them) formed a distinct stream of humanitarianism.[3] Seemingly premodern religious ideas played a central role in the new humanitarian sensibility.

The Perils of Flesh and the Idea of Cruelty, 1671–1738

The scattered handful of antislavery Quakers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not set out to create humanitarianism. They only aimed to convince fellow Friends that slavery contradicted the Society's testimonies. Yet as these critics of slavery articulated a distinctively Quaker rationale for opposing slavery, they helped create—gradually—a vocabulary for humanitarianism. Antislavery Quakers rejected cruelty but not because they objected to pain. Instead, their rejection of cruelty grew out of Quaker testimonies about the relationship between the body and soul, the dangers of worldliness, and the beauty of martyrdom. Activists persistently treated slave pain as the direct result of Friends' moral failings. Enslaved laborers endured pain because Quakers failed to live up to their testimonies about the body, suffering, and otherworldliness. By persistently attributing slavery's violence to Quakers' immorality, activists defined that pain as a moral problem. Activists turned the deliberate infliction of pain on slaves from a morally neutral behavior into cruelty.

This smattering of Quakers faced daunting obstacles. In the early eighteenth century few people would have predicted that Quaker antislavery would gain an aura of inevitability within a mere century. At the dawn of the eighteenth century, Quakers seemed unlikely to distinguish themselves in a battle against slavery. Antislavery Quakers trod a slow, difficult path to convince even fellow Friends that their principles clashed with slavery. Few Quakers publicly doubted the legitimacy of slavery. Far more owned slaves. If one looked hard, one might detect hints of uneasiness among a few early Quakers, but that uneasiness rarely hardened into condemnations of slavery itself. When George Fox, the Society's leader, visited the slaveholding Friends of Barbados in 1671, the experience shook him. He encouraged Quakers to free their slaves after a long period of service. Yet Fox's suggested time frame—initially thirty years—made clear that his true concern lay with spiritual rather than physical freedom.[4] Barbadian Quakers softened racial hierarchies by defying laws against allowing blacks at meetings, but Friends still held and traded slaves.[5] Occasional critics of slavery surfaced, including Robert Piles, George Keith, William Southeby, and the Germantown Quakers in 1688.[6] But slavery flourished in the Society, and few people saw a conflict with Quaker testimony. Slaveholding, far from seeming doomed in the Society, increased as Quakers grew wealthier.[7]

Despite these obstacles a few antislavery Quakers grew unwilling to tolerate slavery within the Society. Initially, these reformers attempted to purify the Society of Friends, not broader society. These reformers contended that individual Friends' participation in the slave trade or slavery undermined the values and identity of the entire Society of Friends. Unlike the theologies of Catholicism and many forms of Protestantism, Quaker theology was defined neither by a cadre of learned theologians nor by the edicts of ecclesial hierarchies, synods, or councils. Instead, Friends' testimony depended on communal witness and consensus, inspired by the leadings of the Inner Light. Because Quakers believed that the Inner Light guided them to unity in the truth, consensus defined their theology and communal identity. Authoritative pronouncements, majority rule, or even compromise undermined the universality of truth by replacing the revelation of the Inner Light with intellectual coercion. Thus, it would be better to reach no decision than to declare one in the absence of consensus.[8] The purity and authority of the Quakers' message depended on their solidarity in testimony. Thus, tolerating moral evil cast the Society's holiness and truth into disrepute. Individuals whose behavior contradicted Quaker testimonies subverted the entire community. Ethical or theological discord compromised not only Quaker testimony but also the community that united in that testimony against a hostile, sinful world.

The same communal ethos that made purging immorality necessary also made the task risky. Purists endangered consensus. If the community had few qualms about slavery, defining slavery as a violation of Quaker ethics was a delicate matter. Purists not only offended slaveholding Quakers but also risked accusations of privileging private judgment over communal testimony. Strident arguments did not help. Quakers relied on the power of truth to convince the open heart rather than overpowering opposition through the force of argument. Denouncing slavery harshly not only alienated other Quakers, but rejecting the consensus might also place the denouncer beyond the pale of Quaker community. Indeed, some of slavery's most strident critics were disowned: Benjamin Lay foremost among them. The Society disciplined Southeby in 1716 and disowned John Farmer in 1729. Attacking slavery indirectly, by linking it to other evils, thus made a great deal of intellectual and practical sense.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a handful of Quaker activists thus described slavery—and its pain—in terms of the broader spir-

itual and moral failings of Quakers. Reformers' objections to cruelty grew out of concern for slaveholders' salvation, not enslaved people's pain. In 1698 Robert Piles dreamed that he could not climb the ladder to heaven while carrying a heavy "black pot." Quakers, reformers suggested, should reject slavery because it led to evils that Friends denounced. Reformers drew causal connections between slavery's violence and the moral or spiritual corruption of slave owners. For Piles slavery forged the first link in a long chain of evils. The slave trade spawned violence in Africa and the Americas; Quakers had to resort to military force to subdue unhappy slaves.[9] Five years earlier, in 1693, George Keith had similarly described slavery as the "occasion" for many other evils, including war, violence, and oppression.[10] The character of slavery revealed itself in its tendency to promote other evils.

Just as Quaker activists tied slavery to other evils, they traced a variety of sins and evil results to slaveholders' infliction of pain. The connections could be loose; George Keith argued in 1693 that harsh treatment of enslaved people cast reproach on Christianity.[11] Critics, however, soon drew tighter connections between slavery's pain and immorality. John Hepburn of New Jersey published a little-noticed essay, "The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule," in 1715. Slavery taught the enslaved to sin and turned them against God. All Ten Commandments would be broken by enslaved people, "occasioned by the *Cruelty* of their Masters." Slaveholding cruelty made slaves doubt, blaspheme, or reject God, and inadequately fed people resorted to stealing to live. Slaveholding cruelty wrenched enslaved blacks away from God and morality.[12] By tying the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain to other kinds of immorality, antislavery Quakers began to undermine the moral neutrality of pain.

Antislavery Quakers tied slavery's pain, in particular, to slaveholders' worldliness and the desire for luxury. This idea drew on an old strain of Christianity—especially monastic Christianity—that cultivated spiritual holiness by abstaining from many worldly pleasures. Ascetics did not necessarily see pleasure as sinful in itself, but overindulging the passions and appetites distracted people from spiritual pursuits and weakened their resistance to sinful pleasures. By fasting, abstaining from certain foods (especially animal products), practicing celibacy or limiting intercourse, inflicting penance or denying oneself pleasures, or choosing lives of poverty, ascetics disciplined their appetites and desires. Asceticism—and its rejection of luxury, unnecessary consumption, and worldly pleasures—insisted that true

pleasure was spiritual; God alone truly satisfied human yearning. For ascetics such as the Catholic Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471), asceticism and self-denial focused the soul on God by stripping away the distractions of the world. Early modern Quakers, other Protestants, and Catholics alike read calls for self-denial in the devotional manual *Imitation of Christ,* attributed to à Kempis. He exhorted: "Learn *now* to Die daily, to Die to Sin and the World, that you may then begin to Live with Christ."[13] Strains of asceticism stretched across the Christian religious spectrum, with wide variation in intensity and form. Quakers exemplified a particularly strong form of asceticism, directed especially against luxury and ostentation. Early Friends tried to purge sinful vanity and self-indulgence by embracing "plainness," especially in clothing, furniture, and architecture. They associated luxury with moral laxity, pretension, and vanity; luxury also signified a focus on worldly externals rather than the soul and the Inner Light. The Society of Friends called on Quakers to condemn luxury and superfluity and to embrace plainness. They did so both to maintain their spiritual focus and to signify their humility before God, who saw through human pretensions.[14]

Antislavery reformers turned Quaker asceticism against slavery by treating a desire for luxury as the driving force behind slavery and its pain. Not only did slavery's violence flow directly out of slaveholders' desires for sinful luxury, but slavery also indulged those desires. Quakers, as Robert Piles argued in 1698, should "be content" with the modest fruit of their own labor, but slavery led to lives of sinful luxury.[15] A disordered hunger for accumulating worldly goods fed on enslaved people's pain. Slavery, Hepburn contended in 1715, allowed owners "to keep themselves with white hands, except at some Times they chance to be besparkled with the Blood of those poor Slaves." Hepburn pointed to the misery of the enslaved not to garner pity for the sufferers but to illustrate the greed, worldliness, and carnality of slaveholders. Slave pain mattered because Friends' sinful worldliness caused it. Slaveholders' worldliness was a distorted reflection of slaves' pain. Owners deprived shivering people of shoes, while "*decking* and adorning their Carkasses."[16] With blood literally on their white, idle hands, slaveholders courted spiritual death; the scarred bodies of slaves mirrored slaveholders' spiritually dead but luxuriously clad "Carkasses." Significantly, Hepburn gave little space to details of how enslaved people were treated; their pain lacked intrinsic moral meaning. Nevertheless, the *infliction* of that pain mattered

because it enabled Quakers to live in sinful luxury.[17] Since pain served sinful purposes, it counted as cruelty.

Hepburn and other critics worried most about the sins that prompted slaveholders to inflict pain, especially the rejection of Quaker ideals of otherworldliness. Slaveholders abused the bodies of enslaved people to feed their own sinful, worldly appetites. Quaker spirituality drew heavily on a broader strain of Christian thinking that pitted the soul against the body and its appetites. The medieval mystic Thomas à Kempis had cautioned readers that "the Distress and Wants of the Outward Man are a sore Hindrance and great Oppression to the Inward." The solution, he suggested, was to "Subdue your Body *now* by Mortification and Self-denial" and "raise your Affections up to nobler Enjoyments."[18] Centuries later his Quaker readers similarly saw bodies—and the world of the flesh—as distracting the soul from its inward life. Detachment from the physical world opened the soul to spiritual union with God. Slaveholders, in contrast, used physical violence to dominate bodies and souls to fill owners' bodily and worldly pleasure. Violence tugged Quakers from the spiritual world into the earthly world; oppressing blacks allowed Quakers to wallow in earthly pleasures. Hepburn hoped to save souls from this "inriching sin."[19]

Quaker reformers treated the violence of slavery as a symptom of slaveholders' disordered obsession with flesh. For Ralph Sandiford slavery defiled the slaveholder's soul by exalting the body and its desires over the soul. In 1729 the Philadelphian explained that cruelty distorted the soul, which took on a "beastly" property—the level of flesh. But good Quakers properly aspired to spiritual detachment from bodies and the "carnal" world; the term *carnal* lumped sexual and all other earthly preoccupations together.[20] Spiritual life ran counter to the carnal world, and the physical violence of slavery defiled the soul by miring it in flesh. Slavery resembled two evils of the flesh, both rooted in disordered bodily appetites: sexual impurity and cannibalism. Whippings "shamefully" exposed slaves' "secret pores," and slaveholders defiled themselves with harlotry from the truth.[21] In contrast to the fleshless freedom of holiness, slavery reduced human beings to flesh. Slaveholders did not trust in God; they nourished themselves with "the Flesh and Blood of Slaves, instead of Christ."[22] Slaveholders not only chose to rely on slave blood rather than spiritual redemption though Christ's blood, but they also lived lives defined by indulgence of bodily appetites and disordered passions.

In 1737 Benjamin Lay similarly treated black suffering as proof of slaveholders' descent into carnality. He contrasted the "self-denying Doctrine" of Christianity and the self-indulgence of Friends who tormented others for worldly gain.[23] Lay viewed spirituality in stark contrast with the flesh. His antislavery treatise even dipped into controversies over the nature of Christ's body; Christ's physical body was merely a "Vail of Flesh" obscuring his true, incorporeal body. Human beings should similarly aspire to escape the limitations of their "Vail of Flesh."[24] In contrast to the disembodied language of spiritual truth, Lay used intensely physical language to describe slavery, comparing it to a body covered with festering sores.[25] The flesh and its world symbolized Friends' spiritual failings. Lay traced his own conversion to seeing starving enslaved Barbadians fight over cockroach-infested biscuits, rotting cheese or meat, and decayed fish.[26] Despite the gruesome details, Lay's point was not really about the wretchedness of slaves; instead, the rotting food symbolized the decay in slaveholders' souls. The bodily woe of the enslaved symbolized the wretched spiritual condition of Quaker owners, who dragged their souls into the filth and mire of carnality; Quaker enslavers reduced themselves to the moral equivalent of the scum produced by sugar refining.[27]

When Quakers inflicted pain on others for the sake of their own luxury, they not only contradicted Christianity's "self-denying doctrine," but they also subverted Quakers' identity as a suffering people. Suffering and martyrdom played critical roles in Quakers' religious identity. Friends glorified martyrs who had suffered pain or death for their beliefs. The earliest records of the Society of Friends recounted stories of Quakers who patiently suffered for the sake of their testimony. In these accounts true Christians played clear roles: they suffered patiently at the hands of wicked tormentors, who inflicted pain to turn Christians from the truth. Quakers—who rejected the principle of persecution, even when directed at others—could properly play only one role in such accounts: they were victims, not perpetrators, of cruelty. Suffering distinguished true Christians from their cruel enemies.

Lay invoked these martyrological conventions, but he cast Quakers as the vicious tormentors, not the suffering victims. Whereas seventeenth-century Quakers had willingly subjected themselves to imprisonment, whippings, and even executions for the truth, their descendants abused enslaved victims. By tormenting slaves, Friends subverted their identity as a suffering people. Lay did not develop this idea single-handedly. In a 1733 antislavery tract the

Nantucket Quaker Elihu Coleman reminded Quakers that they were a "suffering people." In times of ease, however, God's people "became oppressors themselves."[28] Four years later Lay hearkened back to the same history of martyrdom; New England Quakers endured "ruining of Families, Whipping and Banishing almost continually, with cutting of Ears, and Hanging" for their witness.[29] Notably, Lay's list echoed the punishments of enslaved blacks, whose bodies and families suffered at the hands of slaveholding Friends. Quakers' sufferings, moreover, paled next to the "lingering Martyrdom" of present-day slaves, who endured "Starving, Whipping, Racking, Hanging, Burning, Scalding, Roasting, and other Hellish torments." This list of slaveholding cruelties mimicked those of fiendish persecutors in martyrologies.[30] Lay and Coleman cast Quakers in the roles of cruel oppressors who caused pain for evil purposes; both men contrasted slavery with the imagery of Quakers patiently enduring pain. True Christians suffered; they did not inflict pain. Quakers turned into torturers, while enslaved blacks replaced Friends as innocent victims. Inverting that symbolism was no small matter. Cruel Quakers subverted the meaning and symbolism of suffering, which Quakers associated with their testimony. By tormenting others for worldly gain, slaveholders abandoned their witness.

By 1737 individual Friends viewed slaveholding violence as incompatible with Quaker values, but their concern centered on the moral taint on slaveholders and the Society, not the suffering of the enslaved. These activists did not need to be squeamish about pain itself. Instead, they cared because pain flowed out of and supported Friends' vices; by inflicting pain for immoral purposes, Quakers undermined their communal identity. Still, it was a struggle for antislavery Friends to convince other Quakers that slavery was wrong at all, much less that it was evil enough to preclude membership. Slaveholders dominated the Society's American leadership; before 1754, meeting overseers often refused to allow the publication of antislavery texts. By redefining communal identity to exclude slave traders and slaveholders, the push for moral purity undermined communal cohesion. While some activists worked within the bounds of the Society's consensual identity, Benjamin Lay, unwilling to admit slaveholders into the Quaker community for the sake of group cohesion, was disowned.[31] Most Quakers still saw no pressing moral dilemma in human ownership, and the reception of antislavery Quakers remained chilly.

Lay's reception was downright icy. His strategies and rhetoric sharpened

the divide between his vision of Quaker identity and the community's self-understanding. Lay's title, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates,* cast fellow Quakers as apostates beyond the pale of Christianity, not merely sinners who failed to live out their testimonies fully. He echoed other activists when he blamed slaves' misery on Quakers' failure to embrace Christianity's "self-denying Doctrine." Yet Lay went further. He kidnapped a child of slaveholders to make them feel the misery that African parents endured when slave traders kidnapped African children. He was hardly the first Quaker to suggest that slaveholders had blood on their hands, but he made his point by splattering the Society with "blood." At the 1738 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Lay likened slavery's violence to war; to illustrate this, he drove a sword into his "Bible," which spurted red liquid on the group. (He had hollowed out a book, hiding a bladder full of red liquid inside.) After this splattering the fuming Quakers disowned Lay.[32]

In 1738, as the Quakers angrily surveyed their bloody clothes, the prospects of building a humanitarian argument against slavery on Quaker traditions looked dim. A smattering of arguments did not amount to a humanitarian tradition. Nevertheless, Quaker reformers gathered a constellation of concerns and provided the vocabulary that would serve Quaker activism for decades. A handful of Quakers created a moral vocabulary for defining slave suffering as the product of cruelty, and they cast this cruelty in opposition to Quaker testimonies and communal identity. Even as pain itself remained peripheral in this concern about Friends' cruelty, scarred black bodies displayed the sinful agency of white slaveholders. Black pain mattered as a symbol of the moral disorder of both the sinning slaveholder and the Society. Opposition to cruelty did not yet form a crucial part of Quaker identity, but slowly and indirectly slave pain—now tied to cruelty—came to symbolize Friends' infidelity to their testimonies.

Purity and Moral Responsibility: John Woolman and Antislavery, 1754–1774

Within a few decades the prospects for Quaker humanitarianism improved radically. By midcentury, slavery's critics could tap into growing concern among Friends about the implications of wealth and worldliness. Around the 1750s a transatlantic group of Quakers began to call for reform of the Society and its members' lives, demanding that faithful Quakers distance themselves

from the world and its carnal pleasures.[33] These reformers exalted the ascetic and martyrological traditions of Quakerism, pitting these traditions against the growing comforts and sociopolitical status enjoyed by the increasingly affluent sect. John Woolman, a Quaker from Mount Holly, New Jersey, played a pivotal role in this movement. His essay *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754) circulated widely in full and in excerpts. He wrote intermittently in his journal, a spiritual autobiography, beginning around 1756. The posthumously published journal (1774) quickly became a spiritual classic and played a formative role in late-century Quaker antislavery.[34] The journal traced Woolman's spiritual quest for moral purity. Like other ascetic reformers, he saw slavery as a symptom of worldliness; his growing concern about *any* participation in slaveholding and its cruelty stood at the heart of his drive for spiritual purity. Woolman reshaped the nascent Quaker humanitarianism by recasting slave pain as a symptom of the impurities in the hearts of *all* Quakers, even nonslaveholders.

Woolman situated cruelty in an important place in his spiritual journey. In the beginning of his spiritual autobiography, Woolman revealed that as a young boy he had pelted a mother robin to death with stones. After an initial thrill of success he "was seized with horror" and pondered the fate of her orphaned babies. "After some painful considerations," the boy killed the orphans rather than "leave them to pine away and die miserably, and believed in this case that Scripture was fulfilled, 'The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.' "[35] Woolman's cruelty tormented him for some time. That event proved fraught with great spiritual consequences; this "remarkable" incident exposed his spiritual weakness and need for repentance.

In itself, the robins' pain did not figure substantially in the account. Rather, pain mattered indirectly as a symbol of the young tormentor's moral and spiritual dispositions—a trope that later pervaded nineteenth-century children's literature.[36] Woolman's cruelty mattered not because the birds suffered but because he harmed an innocent creature without good cause; he had terrorized and slaughtered a harmless mother robin looking after her young. The boy's first slaughter was "sportive" and purposeless, much as Augustine stole and discarded pears out of sinfulness rather than hunger.[37] The birds' suffering, like Augustine's pears, symbolized gratuitous wickedness. In a narrative of sin and awakening, cruelty stood in for sin and sinfulness; cruelty mattered as a sign of the child's spiritual disorder. A repentant Woolman recognized the incompatibility of Christianity and cruelty: he

could not love God fully without loving God "in all his manifestations," including the life God breathed into "sensitive" creatures.[38] Notably, Woolman singled out *sensitive* creatures: those that felt pain. God gave human beings an inclination "to exercise goodness toward every living creature"; cruelty pitted people against God and creation. Spiritual growth depended on nurturing this sensitivity toward other creatures. People who heeded this God-given inclination learned to be "tender-hearted and sympathizing"; those who rejected it developed "a contrary disposition" that crushed their spiritual growth.[39]

Although the birds' pain mattered little in itself, it mattered a great deal that it resulted from the boy's sins. Woolman blamed those sins—not nature—for causing misery. He described this suffering as the result of *cruelty,* a word charged with deep moral meaning. Cruelty implied that pain resulted from human choice—and that such pain was neither necessary nor proper. God's genuinely "tender mercies" showed in the world; God's nature should have been happy and harmonious.[40] Misery abounded, but that misery resulted from sins. The youthful Woolman turned against God's "tender mercies," turning nature against itself. The baby birds died miserably, but Woolman's action, not God or nature, killed them. The first cruelty triggered a chain of sins, leading him to kill the baby birds. Woolman juxtaposed God's "tender mercies" with his own wickedness: "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The stress lay not on the pain but on the sins that produced it.

Woolman helped give pain new moral meaning by persistently attributing pain to specific sins rather than to the fallen human condition after the original sin of Adam and Eve. Quakers denied the doctrine of original sin, speaking instead of ongoing, active sin. This reoriented the relationship between sin and suffering. For many other Christians, original sin not only tainted human beings with a tendency to sin, but it also introduced suffering into the world, even the anguish of childbirth. Human beings, no matter how virtuous, would escape pain only in heaven. Quaker theology upended this concept. Quakers' abandonment of original-sin models forced Quakers to look not to ancient sins but to modern sinfulness to explain pain. Although Quakers did not explain all pain as the result of sin, they tended to root worldly suffering in a dynamic of action and consequence rather than the fixed state of the world. Human beings could alter chains of causation by changing their choices.[41] Woolman applied this idea to his analysis of slavery: slave pain resulted from a sinful desire for luxury and idleness.[42] Treating

much of the world's pain as the result of the discrete sins of individuals, rather than the facts of life, gave pain and pleasure significant moral content.

As pain gained increasing moral and spiritual import, Woolman attributed meaning to his emotional *responses* to others' pain. If pain signified sin, it called for repentance. Woolman traced his spiritual development through his responses to the pain caused by his or other Quakers' cruelty. After killing the mother robin, Woolman was tormented by "painful considerations" about the baby birds he had left orphaned; similarly, slave suffering brought him "uneasiness" and "extreme sorrow."[43] The prospect of visiting the South and partaking of the hospitality of slaveholders tormented him; if he accepted the benefits of free hospitality, he shared in the "gain of oppression." Woolman calmed his conscience by paying enslaved laborers for their services to him.[44] The discomfort was his, but his emotions pushed him to realign his behavior with God's will. Significantly, Quakers often described spirituality in terms of comfort and discomfort; God prodded people with discomfort. When Woolman yielded to God's will by speaking against slavery, he felt relieved of a pressing burden.[45] He marked his moral and spiritual growth through his emotional reactions to slaves' suffering.

Woolman's emotive language of spirituality echoed a broader eighteenth-century tendency to treat emotional reactions to the pleasures or distress of others as a moral gauge. In the eighteenth-century Anglophone world, sensitive, morally refined people could supposedly feel the bodily or emotional pain of others in their own nerves.[46] Woolman charged this sensitivity with spiritual import. He likened hearing God's call to heeding cries of suffering. Likewise, God "heard the groans of these oppressed people and is preparing some to have a tender feeling of their condition."[47] His own feelings, God's will, and sensitivity to pain blended together. This "tender feeling" was no mere human pity; it was a spiritual, divinely inspired force flowing out of God's sympathy for the oppressed.

For Woolman the sensitivity of the spiritually awakened person contrasted sharply with slaveholders' twofold insensitivity toward their own spiritual danger and toward the pain of the people they enslaved. Even as Woolman's concern focused on slaveholders' guilt, not the pain endured by enslaved blacks, that pain pointed directly to human greed, wickedness, and abuse of power. Woolman softened his criticism by adding that the extent of individual guilt depended on one's intentions. God would show mercy to those who failed to recognize their injustice or those "free from selfishness."[48] Yet slave-

holding still endangered their souls, however insensible they were to the dangers. Slavery supported "the luxuries of life," and a choice to live simply would obviate the "vexations" of slaveholding.[49] Truly innocent slaveholding did not exist. The mere possession of power tempted people. Even the most well-intentioned owners participated in a system they could not control; they would eventually die and consign slaves to others who lacked such scruples.[50]

By structuring his account around a growing sensitivity to sin, Woolman helped build and strengthen expansive conceptions of causality and moral responsibility. The narrative of an unending struggle for moral purity and avoiding complicity in evil framed his treatment of slavery. Sin built on sin. Woolman remembered from his childhood that killing the mother robin had led to a second choice: to kill the baby birds. No act stood in isolation; instead, each act was a link in a long chain of moral responsibility. Chains of causality further implicated countless individuals whose seemingly small sins contributed to greater ones. Moral purity meant avoiding not only particular sins but any complicity—however distant—in evil. Purity meant removing occasion for other sins; it meant severing *any* tie to sin, no matter how tenuous. In a struggle for purity, chains of moral responsibility stretched across the globe. Woolman owned no slaves, but instead of being satisfied with his individual situation, he concluded that even conducting enslavers' legal affairs or accepting their hospitality counted as intolerable participation in slavery. Accepting slaveholders' gifts meant sharing in the "gain of oppression," and gifts tended to "draw the obliged into a party with the giver." By 1769 he publicly criticized the use of items produced by enslaved labor.[51]

Because slavery did not stand alone as a single, isolated evil, Friends could not avoid guilt by simply choosing not to own human beings. Slavery exposed Quakers' sinful tendencies: self-love, greed, and self-gratification. Friends' moral reform depended on a gradual process of disentangling their souls from worldly attachments. Purification began when God acted "on the hearts of people to draw them off from the desire of wealth." If Friends embraced this "humble, lowly way of living," they would then "see their way clearly" to righteousness.[52] Just as sin began with the indulgence of one's self and family, reform began with self-denial.[53] Self-love—even self-love expanded to a family circle—conflicted with the self-denying love of Christianity.

Woolman worried that slave pain enabled all Quakers—not just slaveholders—to live in unnecessary consumption and luxury, which clashed with the self-denying, spiritual character of Christianity. Woolman used metaphors of

physical consumption to highlight the moral dangers of economic consumption. In 1770 he dreamed that an old enslaved man who had become a burden was killed to provide flesh to feed to a ravenous, cat-fox monster. Tea-drinking ladies watched; the gory sight ruined their appetites, but they did not protest. The dream spoke volumes. Slavery reduced a human being to the flesh, perverting the spiritual purpose of life. When the flesh no longer served its purpose, slavery chewed up the flesh. Quakers watched silently, as if they bore no responsibility, but their sugar-sweetened tea created the demand for slave labor; sugar consumption mirrored the bloody consumption of the man's body. Their visceral disgust at the violence failed to break them of their complicity; Woolman wept alone.[54]

Crucially, rather than denouncing the unique sins of slaveholders, Woolman framed his arguments in terms of a universal need for moral purity; in taking this approach, he reformulated the problem of slavery and its cruelty in far-reaching ways. His critique of slaves' pain as the outgrowth and embodiment of worldliness echoed older arguments. But for Woolman cruelty stemmed from a growing array of sins committed by an expanding list of sinners. His analysis implicated all Quakers—not just slave owners. Self-love, luxury, and consumption tied even antislavery Quakers to slavery and cruelty. This message—however gently phrased—fundamentally challenged Quakers. It broadened Quaker responsibility for human suffering beyond their own acts of cruelty; a growing list of actions, rooted in self-love, linked Friends to others' cruelty. Woolman's drive for moral purity created an expansive view of moral responsibility and causality; Quakers who did not whip slaves still bore responsibility for other people's cruelty when they self-indulgently consumed the products of enslaved laborers.

As Woolman broadened the moral responsibility for slavery's cruelty, he joined moral and spiritual purity to *sensitivity* to slave suffering; emotional distress or discomfort became a sign of spiritual awakening. Emotional discomfort began the process of detachment from the self-love and self-indulgence that created nearly universal responsibility for slave pain. Woolman's critique of cruelty turned on the problem of worldliness rather than the problem of pain. Nevertheless, he gave all Quakers a reason to care about that pain as a marker of their spiritual status—whether or not they inflicted the pain themselves.

Woolman's asceticism thus created a key element of a nascent humanitarianism: a broadening sense of responsibility for the suffering of others. Per-

sonal infliction of pain did not exhaust moral responsibility for wrongful suffering. Nor could Quakers absolve their guilt simply by choosing not to own slaves. Any failure to live a life of self-denial tied Quakers to cruelty. Woolman stopped far short of creating a full-fledged, universalized humanitarianism; he simply expanded the lines of moral responsibility to encompass the entire Society of Friends.

Martyrdom and the "Suffering People," 1759–1800

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Quakers' status as a "suffering people" seemed hollow in light of the Society's growing wealth, comfort, and status in the colonies. Friends' experiences of bodily martyrdom had faded into the mists of time. Even Quakers who deliberately antagonized worldly authorities risked neither execution nor the mutilation of tongue-boring. Authorities seized the furniture of Friends who refused to pay war taxes, but losing their belongings was a far cry from losing their lives. The whippings and executions endured by their virtuous ancestors gave way to comfort, wealth, and even political power. Participation in an Atlantic commercial economy brought growing affluence to Quakers as to Americans more broadly. Quakers enjoyed increasing access to once unaffordable consumer goods: Wedgwood china, silver tea sets, Chippendale furniture. Quakers became leading citizens; they even ruled Pennsylvania before leaving their offices at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. Affluence and status whittled away Friends' identity as a persecuted minority.

Few Quakers rejected wealth or the commerce that supported it, but their new ease raised troubling questions for a sect that had historically thumbed its nose at the larger culture and its worldliness. How could Friends mesh their identity as a "suffering people" with the realities of growing wealth, power, and prestige? Such transformations inevitably provoked self-reflection. John Woolman grew up with an intense, troubling consciousness that ancestral holiness had faded in the present day.[55] Quakers lived in a world bounded by the rhetoric of the seventeenth century and the economy and comforts of the eighteenth. Without the actual experience of martyrdom, how could Quakers retain their self-perception as a "suffering people"?

Yet Quakers' communal identity still relied on a self-image of a "suffering people" who chose self-denial over self-gratification. Their investment in that imagery defied the fading of its reality. Even as the likelihood of enduring

literal martyrdom virtually disappeared, Friends continued to associate suffering with their witness to the truth. Indeed, actual safety forced Quakers to rely more heavily on symbolic martyrdom. Reformers called Quakers to grab hold of their ascetic moorings. Some called for Friends to abandon wealth, others for good stewardship of wealth. In this new comfort, consumption raised sticky questions. Few Quakers desired total detachment from the world, or even Woolman's asceticism, but they could not entirely ignore the ideal of self-denial. Some Friends bridged the gap by emphasizing the importance of emotional detachment from worldly goods; they need not reject all carnal pleasures, as long as pleasure did not rule their lives. Wealthy Quakers paid heed to self-denial by buying plain, if expensive, Chippendale furniture. Or self-denial could mean being willing to part with possessions; Quakers' expensive furniture might be seized if they refused to pay war taxes.[56]

As Quakers struggled to maintain an identity as a suffering people, the cruelty of slavery signified their failure to detach sufficiently from the world. In 1759 a Quaker activist published a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes*. With it he published *Some Remarks on the Absolute Necessity of Self-denial, Renouncing the World, and True Charity.*[57] The juxtaposition of humanitarian arguments and a call for self-denial was no coincidence. Slavery's cruelty undermined Friends' image as a suffering people precisely at the moment that this identity seemed most vulnerable. Antislavery grew in the jarring of a seventeenth-century spiritual inheritance against eighteenth-century economic life. Crafting a humanitarian identity allowed prosperous Quakers to reassert their identification with sufferers.[58] Turning against cruelty showed that Friends had successfully navigated the perils of wealth and status. They suffered, but only by refraining from delighting in the full range of commercial activities and consumer goods open to white Americans.

During the second half of the century antislavery moved from being a fringe concern within the Society to become an increasingly central element in Quakers' identity as a suffering people. By the late eighteenth century the Quakers had a numerous, vocal antislavery population. Over several decades the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, the doctrinal watchdog of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, moved toward a consistent antislavery stance. As early as 1755 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting turned firmly against the slave trade. Partly as a result of a growing willingness to discipline or disown uncooperative Quakers, antislavery Friends gained strength in the Society's

leadership, paving the way for slavery's prohibition in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1776.[59] Meetings pressured Friends to manumit slaves, and meetings maintained extensive manumission records to defend liberated people's freedom against kidnappers or reneging family members.[60] Antislavery Quakers pressured slaveholders to free slaves or face costly challenges to their legal titles; many owners chose preemptive emancipation.[61] While activists aimed primarily at purifying the Society of Friends, they also called for laws against the slave trade. Individual Friends, meanwhile, labored within and beyond Quaker circles to change public opinion. Quakers contributed heavily to the membership and leadership of antislavery societies.[62] Ties to English Quakers, reinforced by correspondence between Meetings for Sufferings, channeled American Friends into an international (if mostly Anglo-American) movement. Anthony Benezet gained international fame for his works against the trade and slavery.[63] The nascent antislavery movement often had a Quaker face.

This fledgling movement drew on older precedents—especially Woolman's essays and journal—to link the suffering spirit of Quakerism to moral opposition to slavery. For John Woolman slavery's cruelty subverted the moral and spiritual meaning of suffering. True holiness meant a self-denying, Christlike willingness to suffer; slavery meant a worldly readiness to make others suffer rather than deny oneself. As Woolman worked against slavery, the sufferings of Christ and early Christians were "livingly revived in me."[64] Woolman described a vision in which enslaved mine workers concluded that "Christ is a cruel tyrant" when they learned that their oppressors worshipped Christ.[65] The cruelty of slavery distorted Quakers' self-denying testimony.

Following Woolman, antislavery Friends tied personal and communal moral purity to a rejection of slavery and its cruelty. Reformers embraced the "suffering spirit of the Gospel."[66] Quakers' teachings called them to "live in the Cross that crucifies to the World."[67] Spiritual reading exalted the martyrdom and suffering of their ancestors. George Fox's popular journal recounted the cruelties Quakers endured for their principles, and his epistles exhorted Quakers to suffer willingly.[68] In 1753 Joseph Besse compiled and published the multivolume *Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, reminding Friends of the ties between their testimony and identity as a suffering people.[69] In 1676 English Quakers had created a "Meeting for Sufferings," delegating to it the responsibility both to guard the Society's doctrinal purity and to record Quakers' sufferings; the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting created its

own Meeting for Sufferings in 1756. As time diminished persecution, suffering and testimony stayed firmly linked. The London Meeting for Sufferings worried that growing comforts would "tempt those under Suffering to evade their testimony."[70] Even in times of safety and comfort, suffering played a central role in Quaker identity.

Building on traditions of martyrdom, Quakers invoked a language of spiritual power exercised through suffering. Voluntary suffering demonstrated strength over "carnal" powers. Only spiritual weapons, not violence or coercion, could thwart evil. As Anthony Benezet explained, Christ "gave a deadly blow to sin by suffering. . . . This is the mystery which is hid from the wise the rich and the great of this world."[71] Natural human reason might never grasp this mysterious strength, but only patient suffering conquered worldly power.[72] Benezet was saying nothing new. George Fox had reminded Friends that "if ye *suffer,* ye by *suffering* will get Dominion over their Heads," and Fox himself echoed a much older Christian belief that human weakness made room for divine strength.[73] Christians read in Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (12:10). Early modern Christians—both Catholics and Protestants—had invoked the spiritual power of martyrs, especially to convert observers, at the height of a martyr's apparent weakness.[74] By placing martyrdom and suffering at the core of their identity, Friends amplified this broader pattern of thought. Strength through suffering inverted human views of power: worldly power betrayed weakness, and the sufferer wielded true power. By overturning structures of power, martyrdom gave Quakers a compelling language—especially as they retreated from holding political power. Martyrdom provided a potent political tool in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries among Christians, particularly Quakers.[75]

Quakers no longer faced public martyrdom, but the faithful expected to suffer in smaller ways. By doing so patiently, they showed confidence in God's love and truth. On the deaths of fellow Friends, Quakers penned memorials, for both private and public consumption, narrating their sufferings and deaths. Quakers echoed medieval traditions of *ars moriendi* (the art of dying). This devotional literature taught believers to prepare for death throughout their lives by meditating on the sufferings and deaths of others and reflecting on their own future deaths. Quakers read Thomas à Kempis's exhortations to reflect on people's "Parting agonies" and to be "in a constant

Expectation, and in a good Disposition to die."[76] John Woolman loaned out his copy of the Anglican William Sherlock's *Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (1689), which similarly taught readers that "there is not a more effectual Way to revive the true Spirit of Christianity in the World than seriously to meditate on what we commonly call the Four last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell."[77] Meditations on death reminded even healthy people to look after their eternal salvation. Deathbeds also gave the dying a chance to testify; the Quaker who greeted death with joy, calmness, or resignation demonstrated confidence in God's promises. The "death-bed of the righteous" offered a profound witness—echoing that of martyrs—and the Society eagerly collected and reprinted such accounts.[78] Local meetings collected stories for their members. Particularly inspiring accounts filled the pages of a popular multivolume collection, *Piety Promoted, in Brief Memorials of the Virtuous Lives, Services and Dying Sayings, of Several of the People Called Quakers.* These volumes—and imitators—were reprinted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The antislavery activist Moses Brown praised their "testimony to the precious cause of Truth."[79]

In such meditations, Quakers developed a religious language of sympathy running parallel to moral-philosophical theories.[80] Memorials encouraged Friends to imagine themselves in the place of sufferers and to share sufferers' feelings. Memorials called Friends to meditate on and emulate others' suffering. Books and real-life death scenes encouraged Quakers to gaze on a suffering Quaker and imagine how they would feel in his or her place. How confidently would they greet their own deaths? Religiosity suffused this sympathy. A Quaker woman cherished the spiritual sustenance of a "sympathy more than natural."[81] Sympathy filled a biblical command to "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer Adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." (Significantly, nineteenth-century abolitionists routinely cited this verse to call for sympathy for enslaved blacks.)[82] Memorials described the deceased's sympathy for others' sufferings, reinforcing the link between sympathy and spiritual growth.[83] By recognizing how much someone suffered, observers affirmed the spiritual victory of the Quaker who patiently endured that pain. Bodies did not matter, but triumph over bodies did. Paradoxically, suffering mattered precisely because it did not matter.

Quaker spirituality called Friends to greet suffering with resignation, cheer, and even pleasure because suffering nurtured spiritual growth. Most Quakers did not seek suffering, but their spirituality encouraged them to embrace the

suffering that found them. God sent suffering for many reasons. As one woman reflected, it taught dependence on God.[84] Pain also gave sufferers a chance to show their love for God while "under the discipline of his chastening rod" and not only in times of ease.[85] God used suffering to draw people away from their fleshly pursuits; pain reminded them that true happiness was spiritual.[86] When sent by God and received in the proper spirit, suffering redirected the soul to holiness.[87] Quakers did not expect to find joy in pain, but they reminded each other that it would "produce the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness."[88] Friends devoured accounts of the sufferings of holy men and women—ranging from Christ to the early eighteenth-century French Quietist Madame Guion. Despite Guion's Catholicism, her thirst for the "privilege of suffering" for Christ found a ready audience among Friends. Her Quietism, which preached passivity before God and the "crucifying operations of the divine spirit," resonated with Quaker spirituality; suffering opened a path for God to work in and on the human soul.[89] When Martha Routh read Guion's account, she lamented that she was "so far behind" Guion "in suffering for Christ."[90] Few Quakers sought pain, but Friends praised pain as a path to spiritual growth.

The religious meaning of suffering and martyrdom encouraged Quakers to reject cruelty by providing a narrative structure for interpreting suffering and its causes. Friends' *experience* of suffering per se might have done little to sensitize them to slavery; after all, examples abound of once-persecuted people persecuting others. Yet Quakers also had a spiritual and intellectual framework for understanding suffering in religious terms. Although God used pain for holy purposes, human beings used it to draw God's people from their testimony. Quakers associated the human infliction of pain with abuse of power, and they identified suffering with witnessing to the truth. They echoed a broader Christian pattern of glorifying martyrs, but Friends intensified and reshaped this tradition by linking martyrdom to a principled rejection of persecution and worldly power. Like sixteenth-century Anabaptists, Quakers saw themselves as "nonvictimizing victims"; true Christians suffered persecution, never perpetrating it.[91] This model created a narrative structure for analyzing accounts of cruelty; it encouraged Friends to sort actors into innocent victims and wicked persecutors.

Slavery's critics invoked Quakers' own suffering as a model to interpret slavery's cruelty. Historically, Quakers used their sufferings to challenge worldly oppression; now, the suffering of enslaved people reproached worldly Quak-

ers. During an illness, Abner Woolman, John's brother, reflected at length on Friends' "former sufferings for the cause of Truth" and "the present sufferings of the Negroes under us."[92] He linked Friends' cruelty and Friends' historical suffering, tying both to his personal suffering. Institutionally, Quakers connected their sufferings with cruelty to the enslaved. The Meeting for Sufferings collected accounts of Quakers' sufferings and persecutions, including their ongoing troubles over war taxes. Not coincidentally, the same group was responsible for coordinating antislavery action. In the face of temptations from a worldly but tolerant society, the sufferings of slaves took on heightened meaning in Quakers' identity as a suffering people.[93] By sympathizing with enslaved blacks, Quakers placed themselves back on the side of the martyrs; they symbolically cast their lot with sufferers rather than persecutors. Quakers who suffered no personal bodily harm affirmed their fidelity to their testimony by reacting sympathetically to slave suffering.

Martyrological traditions gave Friends a set of tools for interpreting and fighting slavery's evils. George Fox and early Friends had gathered accounts of sufferings to present to worldly authorities; John Woolman and others recommended reviving this strategy to fight slavery.[94] By the end of the century activists relied heavily on accounts of suffering to engender sympathy. Yet their focus remained on the souls of slaveholders. Even as Quakers invoked the language of martyrdom, the notion of slaves as martyrs was overshadowed by the image of Quaker slaveholders as persecutors. Activists focused on the jarring disconnect between Quaker ideals of holy martyrdom and the practices of slaveholding. They worried first about the failure of Quakers to live out *their* identity as a suffering people and less about the experiences of the new suffering people.

Traditions of martyrdom also shaped Quaker's perceptions of their own and slaves' moral agency. Martyrological conventions made suffering valuable to the victim, even while Quakers denounced the infliction of that pain. Even as Friends railed against cruelty, they expected enslaved sufferers to submit quietly. By the eighteenth century, Quakers had reimagined their history of martyrdom. Early Quakers had deliberately antagonized authorities and disrupted the political and religious order, but eighteenth-century Quakers increasingly stressed the passivity and quiet submission of such martyrs.[95] Aggressive confrontation no longer suited Quakers' image of martyrdom; martyrdom and patient submission increasingly fit together. As Friends revised their history, they recommended patience and passivity to

the enslaved. Slaves, an antislavery convention in Philadelphia emphasized, should learn "the propriety of quiet submission." Patient suffering might persuade slaveholders to treat slaves better; slaveholders might even repent.[96] God would eventually sort out innocent victims from cruel villains; slaves' temporary suffering paled next to the eternal torments awaiting their oppressors. As Anthony Benezet explained, slaves' suffering would end in heaven, but slaveholders' cruelty would "extend its baneful influence even in the regions of Eternity."[97] Slaveholders' immorality was more urgent than blacks' pain. That pain, after all, could bring rewards if enslaved sufferers endured it patiently and faithfully, but inflicting pain made the white Quaker a persecutor rather than a martyr-victim.

This logic of submission also carried the seeds of an indictment of cruelty. Submission played an important role in Quaker belief and worship; Friends stressed the duty of passivity and resignation to God's leadings.[98] God used pain to teach resignation and openness to His will and to remind human beings of their dependence. In English, centuries-old usages of *suffer* linguistically linked pain, passivity, and submission. One "suffered" by enduring bodily pain, but to "suffer" also meant to submit patiently, to accept, to be passive, or to be acted upon.[99] In the context of Quaker Quietism, *suffer* might also mean to be acted *in* by God.[100] Suffering turned one's will to defer to another will. God bent the human will to holiness through suffering. Quakers echoed the medieval mystic Thomas à Kempis's prayer: "O strike and spare not, so thou bend my stubborn Heart, and bring down my High Spirit, and make me tractable and obedient."[101] In contrast, human beings distorted God's beneficent purposes for pain when they used pain to twist slaves to a human, worldly will. Slaveholders made enslaved people "tractable and obedient" to a human being rather than to God. Persecutors had similarly used whips to turn Quakers away from their religious duties, to make them submit to human, rather than divine, will. Human cruelty countered God's design for pain. Pain had value, but the direction and source of pain mattered deeply. Acquiescence to suffering, though laudable, should be submission to God; cruelty turned the redemptive meaning of suffering on its head.

Moral Responsibility and the Geography of Suffering

By the late eighteenth century, Quakers had developed a moral language that defined cruelty as the antithesis of their identity as a suffering people.

Quakers' concerns about African Americans' pain remained self-referential; black pain mattered because white Quakers drew direct causal connections between Friends' moral failings and that pain. Indeed, Quaker activism initially focused on purging the Society of Friends of slaveholding; their concern did not immediately or obviously extend beyond the Society.

Yet Quakers' localized humanitarianism grew into moral concern about cruelty perpetrated on distant slaves, whom Friends might never see, much less whip. This global humanitarianism depended on Quakers' ability to understand their personal sins as a cause of distant cruelty, despite the distance. Echoing John Woolman, Quakers began to accept responsibility for distant pain, because they traced it to their own greed and failure to embrace the ethics of self-denial. Friends' image as a suffering, self-denying people helped them see slavery not only as an individual choice but also as a systemic evil that implicated a global network of actors. Quakers' emphasis on self-denial helped them imagine themselves as causal links in a cruel Atlantic-wide system.[102] The self-referential character of Quakers' concern did not narrow their vision to their neighborhoods. Instead, Friends' concern for their own moral purity nurtured an expansive humanitarian impulse that extended in a transatlantic web stretching from their homes to Africa, to the Caribbean, and to the southern colonies (and states). Although moralists consistently assumed that moral concern and sympathy for suffering faded with distance, strikingly (and counterintuitively), humanitarianism actually strengthened with its spatial expansion. As it turned out, distant slavery drew more rhetorical fire than the cruelties of neighbors. Distance mattered less than relations of causality.[103]

In the late eighteenth century, activists fired their salvos at the slave trade, arguing that the trade, rooted in greed, wreaked far-reaching havoc. An American Friend's decision to buy a slave, activists intimated, resulted in cruelty, bloodshed, and war. They painted the trade in vivid detail to highlight the distant consequences of local choices. Cruelty thus moved closer to the center of antitrade rhetoric, which grew both sentimental and gruesome. Often beginning by conjuring up images of once-peaceful African villages set ablaze and ravaged by war, Quakers such as Anthony Benezet described loathsome conditions on ships. They recounted outrageous cruelties, often involving forced cannibalism, torture, and gruesome murders.[104] Slave traders ignored tearful entreaties and tore apart clasping husbands and wives. Activists plucked readers' heartstrings, depicting traders leaving a trail of broken bodies, sundered families, and destroyed communities in their wake.

The slave trade—motivated by the demand for enslaved laborers and the luxuries they produced—rhetorically morphed into an original sin that set a series of evils in motion and spun a web of complicity that ensnared countless people. The chain of evils and anguish revealed the ruinous effects of sin writ large.

In Quaker rhetoric the distant slave trade and cruelty in the West Indies tended to displace local, long-standing slavery. But while Quakers downplayed nearby slavery, they did not ignore it entirely; rather, they tied local slavery to distant cruelty. They tended to treat distant slavery as more cruel than local slavery, so as activists pressured Quakers to emancipate, they also protected free blacks from kidnapping or reenslavement. Kidnappings mirrored the violence of African enslavement and tied local Friends to the cruelty of distant slavery. Quakers thus fought for laws prohibiting exportation of enslaved people out of state, particularly further south or to the West Indies. The New Yorker John Murray informed Moses Brown about efforts to ban moving enslaved blacks south, where slaves "endure a far more horrid state of Oppression than is exhibited in these parts."[105] Brown, in turn, encouraged Jonathan Edwards Jr. to persevere in similar efforts in Connecticut; the rights and treatment of enslaved blacks would be injured by southward sales.[106]

When Quakers focused on slavery itself, they pointed to the enormous evils perpetrated in the distant West Indies and, occasionally, the southern mainland colonies (and later states). The suffering of nearby slaves received scant attention. The relentless attention on distant cruelties at the expense of local cruelties created a geography of cruelty. Cruelty increased with every southward move, becoming a peculiar characteristic of warm, semitropical climes. Anthony Benezet, who lived in Philadelphia, highlighted cruelty to enslaved blacks in Barbados and the southern mainland. Philadelphia Friends contrasted slavery in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where enslaved people were usually "humanely & rationally treated as fellow men," to slavery farther south, where the enslaved were "treated with less Consideration & Tenderness than Beasts of Burthen." On second consideration someone added, "too generally." It softened the criticism but not the comparison.[107] Southerners pointed farther south or to the West Indies. Quakers in Talbot County, Maryland, worried about cruelty to enslaved people sold to the Carolinas and Georgia.[108]

Likewise, the supposed mildness of local slavery provided a framework to

understand the horrors of distant cruelty. Moses Brown was one of Rhode Island's leading critics of slavery, but when one of his neighbors' slaves appealed to Brown for aid, Brown recommended patience. Later, Brown told the story to the neighbor, Samuel Nightingale, yet recommended neither manumission nor gentler treatment. Rather, he wrote because he suspected Nightingale was planning a slaving voyage; if even Nightingale's slaves chafed at their bonds, how much more must enslaved Africans in the West Indies suffer?[109] Six years later, when an enslaved woman appeared on Brown's doorstep clutching a child and weeping that Nightingale had beaten her with a broomstick, Brown hesitated to interfere in a "delicate" matter. She had deserved *some* punishment; Nightingale's real infraction was using "an improper Instrument of Correction"—a broomstick rather than a whip. Brown thought the Nightingales had "forgiving Temper[s]," but he failed to persuade the woman and child to return.[110] Brown cared about cruelty, but he reserved his moral fire for the worst cases on board ships and in distant climes. Local suffering mattered, but mostly as a comparative tool to grasp the enormity of distant cruelty.

Brown and other antislavery Quakers trained their eyes on the slave trade, West Indian slavery, and, to a lesser extent, southern mainland slavery. In part this focus reflected the international orientation of the antislavery movement, in which the fate of sugar-island slaves loomed large. American Quakers read British authors such as Thomas Clarkson or James Ramsay alongside American ones.[111] Until the American Revolution British West Indians were simply richer fellow colonists with strong economic and cultural ties to the mainland colonies. Yet this orientation mattered; it reinforced the tendency to highlight cruelty inflicted by unknown people elsewhere, drawing geographical divisions between the humane and the cruel. Such tendencies also shaped the rhetoric of both pro- and antislavery forces throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cruelty increasingly became something that happened in a far-off place, and distant regions became defined in terms of the pain inflicted there.[112]

Distance, however, posed problems locally, for antislavery Quakers needed to convince others—and themselves—that distant suffering mattered. How could Friends feel responsibility for enslaved people whom they never owned, whipped, or even saw? In 1784 a Rhode Island paper reprinted London Quakers' warning that when enslaved victims "are some thousand miles off, the danger is the greater of some not laying their sufferings to heart."[113] Years

earlier, John Woolman had voiced the same concern. If Quakers would "attend to these scenes in Africa in like manner as if they were transacted in our presence, and sympathize with the Negroes in all their afflictions and miseries as we do with our children or friends, we should be more careful to do nothing in any degree helping forward a trade productive of so many and so great calamities." The distance did not diminish the injury, but Woolman and his fellow Quakers fretted that it reduced local Quakers' sense of responsibility.[114]

Yet Quaker conventions of assigning responsibility for suffering allowed—and even encouraged—Quakers to view distant slave pain as their moral concern. Moral responsibility did not depend on the mere existence of suffering, close or distant. Instead, responsibility depended on Friends' role in causing the suffering. Other people's pain mattered only when it marked Quakers' guilt, only when reformers saw their own local sinfulness as a direct or indirect cause of cruelty to distant slaves. Slavery was a "complicated iniquity"; it was neither an isolated nor a purely individual sin.[115] Local ownership of slaves contributed to the slave trade, which in turn sparked wars in Africa and strengthened slavery elsewhere. Moses Brown excerpted Benjamin Rush's description of slavery as a "complicated" evil, creating bloody wars, separating families, and cutting lives short by cruelty or murder.[116] When Mary and Moses Brown manumitted their slaves, both attributed their change of heart, in part, to realizing that any slaveholding—regardless of how individuals treated enslaved laborers—tended "to encourage the iniquitous practice of importing them."[117] Emancipation reduced Quakers' complicity in the devastation of the trade and the miseries of the Middle Passage. Slave traders incited wars among Africans to satisfy white Americans' thirst for slaves; the trade provided "the principal source" of wars and misery in Africa.[118] Holding slaves enmeshed Friends in a transatlantic web of violence.

Quakers did not even need to hold slaves to bear responsibility for distant slave pain because demand for luxuries created demand for enslaved laborers. Quakers' emphasis on moral purity bridged distances and reinforced the importance of slave pain.[119] In a globalizing economic system, consumption tied even nonslaveholding Quakers to slavery, the slave trade, and African wars; distant slavery supported Quaker consumers in morally questionable luxury. Quakers' vices directly abetted cruel slaveholders. Despite the distance, Joseph Mitchell of Rhode Island took care that no "part of his conduct might Countenance that Unrighteous gain of Oppression."[120] To cleanse their consciences, Friends had to extricate themselves from an increasingly com-

plex, systemic evil. However physically remote the suffering, Quakers bore moral responsibility when they sweetened their tea with sugar produced by enslaved labor or tucked themselves into bedding dyed with slave-produced indigo.[121] Benjamin Lay had famously smashed his deceased wife's china to protest tea drinking in 1742.[122] Most tea sets remained intact, but avoiding sugar bore great symbolic weight. The Quaker Samuel Allinson extracted a passage from the *London Chronicle*, explaining that no "petty Pleasure" of taste could "compensate for so much misery."[123] Sugar, especially in tea, evoked refinement and luxury. By drawing a direct connection between remote cruelty and local luxuries, antislavery Friends placed slave pain directly in the sphere of Quaker moral responsibility. Distant black bodies evidenced local white moral failings.

Antislavery Quakers drew clear connections between their luxurious consumption and the cruelties endured by distant sufferers. London Quakers imagined themselves as slaves who would "behold an increase of luxury and superfluity among our oppressors, and therewith feel an increase of the weight of our burdens."[124] Cruelty not only revealed improper love of gain; it also grew directly out of it. Cruelty not only supported the "wanton expense" of slaveholders; it also supplied the luxuries that non-owning Quakers greedily consumed.[125] Quakers did not necessarily object to consumption itself. Yet ascetically inclined Friends used a language of stewardship to link *excessive* worldliness to the misery of others. True holiness meant crucifying the self and regarding oneself merely as a steward of God's gifts; those who snatched more than their share caused others misery. Hoarding an enormous fortune, Anthony Benezet explained, was the moral equivalent of owning thousands of shoes while the bare feet of the poor froze.[126] The language of stewardship linked greed to suffering, rooting pain not in a fallen world but in discrete moral acts.

Eighteenth-century life created extensive opportunities for individuals to become enmeshed in the "complicated" evil of slavery or to share in the "gain of oppression." Anthony Benezet worried, particularly, about Friends who married into slaveholding families; a desire for wealth ensnared them in slaveholding.[127] Avoiding direct involvement in the trade did not suffice; nations brought "iniquity and blood guiltiness" on themselves by allowing slave ships to equip in their ports. A single gulp of English air might break a slave's shackles, but as long as British authority and capital backed the trade,

Britain invited divine wrath.[128] Removing the stain of slavery was no easy task. Anthony Benezet lamented "We[']re slaves of slaves."[129]

Yet because Quakers focused on physically distant evils, moral responsibility risked remaining a disembodied concept. So Quakers and their allies used vivid stories—imagined and real—to lend emotional force to the abstract recognition that they were implicated in a global system of slavery. The imagination recreated the moral presence of cruelty for distant readers and consumers. This might take the form of dreams and visions; Moses Brown excerpted Benjamin Rush's imaginative journey from Africa to a plantation, conjuring up images of suffering each step of the way.[130] These imagined scenes drew on a growing supply of vivid anecdotes about cruelty. Quakers had traditionally collected accounts of sufferings; now they used such accounts to inspire emotional revulsion against slavery. Anthony Benezet described the killing of an enslaved woman; she had been beaten and then dragged behind a horse. Benezet stressed the failure of those present—save the reporter—to respond with sensitivity.[131] Quakers began amassing specific "instances of barbaraty [*sic*]," not only to spark the imagination but also to use in legal battles, particularly as Rhode Island Quakers helped push through a law banning residents from participating in the trade. Moses Brown cited the murder of rebelling slaves on the ship of his brother, John Brown; such anecdotes bolstered legal cases against traders.[132]

Focusing on concrete examples of cruelty was a strategic shift in the late eighteenth century. Earlier Quakers had declined to highlight particular instances of cruelty. John Hepburn found no space for them in 1715—including them would "swell up a Book"—and focused instead on the moral harm to owner and slave.[133] Apart from a few details that the authors happened to have at hand, early works contained few concrete accounts of cruelty. Rather than researching particulars, authors tended to generalize about treatment. But as Quakers insisted that distant cruelty depended on local action, they sought details to spark visceral reactions and establish moral immediacy. By the late eighteenth century, authors elaborated specific instances of cruelty in horrifying detail. One captain on a Barbados-bound slaver, Anthony Benezet reported, punished a captive who refused to eat by chopping him "into small pieces, forcing some of the others to eat a part of the mangled body."[134] The demand for details was fulfilled by a growing supply of information, gleaned from personal research, other activists, and, ultimately, British parliamentary

proceedings. Polemicists liberally borrowed from each other, especially stories of gruesome murders, to flesh out their arguments. Their focus remained on slaveholders' cruelty rather than enslaved people's experiences, but appalling descriptions of murder and torture increasingly put slave pain in public view.

Quakers increasingly relied on emotions to forge connections between local choices and distant consequences. Antislavery Friends described morality in terms of emotions and sensibilities, and they depicted cruelty to galvanize emotional reactions to slavery. Quakers portrayed themselves as "deeply affected with the cruelty and injustice" of slavery; their hearts and souls were "pierced" by such an "affecting evil."[135] Building on the rhetoric of John Woolman, they treated emotional sensitivity to slave suffering as an indicator of one's broader moral and spiritual status. Such sensitivity and emotion contrasted sharply with the hard-heartedness of those who could perpetrate gruesome murders or "deluge millions in slavery and blood, with an unfeeling heart"—all for the sake "of a little gain."[136] After recounting grisly tales of murders and forced cannibalism, Benezet added that such incidents only shocked those "whose hearts are not yet hardened by the practice of that cruelty, which the love of wealth, by degrees, introduceth into the human mind."[137] When Benezet equated a hard heart with insensitivity to suffering, his readers would remember that in the Bible, the hard-hearted were those who rejected God's will.[138] Sincere disgust for evil and immorality found its clearest proof in the "affected" heart.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Quakers had fashioned an emotionally charged humanitarianism rooted in self-referential concerns about Friends' own moral purity. Despite its self-referential roots, this humanitarianism now looked across the oceans to Africa, the West Indies, and Britain. The Quakers' humanitarianism linked their economic choices, distant slavery, and the cruelties of the slave trade. The rhetorical focus on distant slavery and the slave trade invested local actions with worldwide consequences. Choosing to use sugar or indigo-dyed cloth triggered a chain of evils far beyond the Quaker's household. Even as Quakers gazed into the distance, the trail of complicity led home to their self-indulgent consumption. Tackling faraway evils purified their own homes. Languages of self-denial, asceticism, and moral consumption justified attacks on distant cruelty.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Quaker spirituality seemed unlikely to nurture humanitarianism; Friends' theology treated suffering as

meaningful and spiritually valuable. But by the end of the century the belief that suffering and self-denial served useful spiritual purposes had led Friends not only to turn against personal cruelty but also to reject any economic connection with slavery's cruelty. That they should come to this conclusion was hardly obvious. Quakers' rejection of fleshly pleasures might have easily led them to dismiss slave suffering as unimportant; instead, they persistently associated slave suffering with Quakers' own moral failings—particularly worldliness and luxury. Even though the pain of enslaved people still mattered far less than in its ability to reflect white immorality, the infliction of pain fell into moral disrepute.[139] Quaker moral perfectionism and objections to worldliness combined to create a sense of moral responsibility for the suffering of their own slaves and of enslaved blacks far away.

Quakers' asceticism grounded this worldwide humanitarianism, but their path to humanitarianism mattered. Friends attacked cruelty by highlighting the slave trade, kidnappings, and West Indian slavery rather than local slavery. This strategy served practical political purposes, and it allowed Friends to join with campaigns against the trade elsewhere. But the choice also had far-reaching consequences. By focusing on distant cruelty rather than local slavery, Quakers developed a regional consciousness articulated in the language of cruelty. From its earliest days, humanitarianism worked better at a distance than it did locally. Friends did expect local results. Anthony Benezet confidently predicted that abolishing the trade would ameliorate and ultimately destroy slavery, and he was not alone in that belief.[140] But in unintended ways, focusing on the distant evils of the slave trade or on extreme cases of cruelty also reinforced the stable, yet oppressive, slavery surrounding Quakers.[141] The rhetorical distancing of cruelty could foster moral complacency by skirting questions about the place and rights of blacks in local society.[142] Nor did humanitarianism require Quakers to develop ideological opposition to slavery's existence, as long as they played no direct role in it. Over the long term, the strategy also reinforced a common moral distinction between the unjustifiable slave trade and the tolerable established slavery. Focusing on distant cruelty thus limited Quakers' moral radicalism. In ensuing decades this distinction between the African slave trade and established slavery mattered even more, as the abolition of the trade succeeded, but slavery grew more entrenched.

Quaker humanitarianism developed out of the tension between Friends' seventeenth-century spiritual traditions and values and the reality of an

eighteenth-century globalizing and increasingly consumer-oriented economy. Antislavery humanitarianism gave Quakers a way to navigate between total asceticism and an unequivocal embrace of this new economy; humaneness placed moral limits on consumption without forbidding it all. Humanitarianism allowed Friends to distinguish selfish, greedy, hard-hearted consumption from consumption compatible with the ascetic spirit of Quakerism. Friends could drink their tea out of china, provided they did not sweeten the tea with slave-produced sugar. The impossibility of fully avoiding involvement in slavery's cruelty lent a sense of urgency to their struggle against the slave trade. If Friends could not avoid participating in slavery, they could assuage their guilt by trying to remove the trade itself.

Quaker humanitarianism grew out of white guilt, and this origin shaped humanitarianism in the long run. Slave bodies became markers of white guilt or purity; slaves' scarred flesh became evidence of whites' moral status. Such sensitivities could be deeply self-referential, focusing on the active agency of the sinful slaveholder more than the presumably passive slave. In the long term this self-referential nature of Quakers' moral concerns about suffering shaped humanitarian strategies; Friends devised solutions that focused on the agency of white Quakers rather than ones aiming directly at restoring the rights of African Americans. Ending Quaker complicity proved easier than ending slavery. Invoking cruelty sharpened Friends' opposition to slavery, but it also narrowed their moral vision. Quaker views of asceticism and causality created a useful language for humanitarianism, but that language by no means proved to be an unambiguous one. The language of humaneness focused on the wrong of inflicting pain, not the rights of blacks to be free from that pain.

By the late eighteenth century, Quakers played a crucial role in the articulation of a humanitarian sensibility, but they hardly did so single-handedly. Friends' invocations of self-denial, asceticism, and martyrdom had a distinctively Quaker tone, but Quakers played a variation on a broader Christian theme. Their strain of humanitarianism thus resonated with ascetically minded Christians beyond the Society of Friends. When the Methodist founder John Wesley attacked slavery, he drew heavily on Anthony Benezet's works, and the two men shared ideas and strategies. Not coincidentally, Wesley joined Benezet and the Quakers in exalting self-denial, asceticism, and the drive for moral perfection.[143]

Quakers shaped the discourses of humaneness significantly, in both possi-

bilities and limitations.[144] Yet theirs was not the only path to humanitarianism. In America and Europe (particularly Scotland) moral philosophers moved in similar directions, developing theories that gave pain and pleasure important roles in moral reasoning and motivation. By the end of the eighteenth century, religious imperatives to meditate on human suffering and moral philosophical injunctions to identify and respond to the pain of others combined in potent languages of benevolence and sympathy. Together, these languages about suffering nurtured a fledgling humanitarianism.

CHAPTER TWO

Humanity, Human Nature, and the Problem of Cruelty

A late eighteenth-century observer listening in on American moral rhetoric would hardly need good ears to catch the words *humaneness, sympathy,* or *benevolence.* A chorus of Quakers, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and countless others joined in a refrain denouncing those who inflicted pain on helpless victims. Across the religious spectrum, voices insisted that a true Christian would never inflict unnecessary pain on anyone and that cruelty was the antithesis of morality. The observer might easily conclude that the chorus of humanitarianism indicated moral unanimity about humanity, sympathy, and benevolence.

It did not. The seemingly harmonic swell of voices lauding humaneness smoothed over and obscured the underlying complexity of American humanitarianism. The voices of Quakers and moral philosophers blended together to attack cruelty, but competing assumptions about human nature and the moral value of pain and self-denial drove these attacks. Friends objected to Quaker cruelty because it contradicted their self-image as a suffering people. They distrusted worldly self-gratification, and they associated true holiness with stripping away their worldly selves to open themselves to the Inner Light. In

the broader Anglo-American community, in contrast, moralists viewed self-denial and asceticism as a shaky foundation for an ethical society. Self-denial set the bar of morality impossibly and discouragingly high. Morality should not depend on the ceaseless toil of rooting out one's inclinations and desires. Instead, with a little help, morality grew organically in the soil of natural human desire. First among these desires was a natural wish to see others happy. Moderate self-love and earthly pleasure would not compete with the sprouting plant; they would nourish and encourage morality's growth.[1] This strain of humanitarianism took root in the idea that human passions and the structure of the moral world conspired together to channel human actions into moral and socially beneficial behaviors.

Despite these differences both types of humanitarianism fixated on the moral status of white observers and participants in slavery. Both came to the problem of pain only indirectly, through the problem of cruelty. But even as whites worried more about how perpetrating or observing cruelty affected themselves than about the anguish of the victims, this indirect, self-referential concern corroded the moral neutrality of inflicting pain. Although the tears of observers mattered more than the blood of victims, cruelty demanded an emotional response.[2]

Human Nature, Benevolence, and the Problem of Cruelty

When Jonathan Edwards, the son of the famous Reformed (Calvinist) theologian, attacked slavery in a 1791 speech to the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom, he cited "inhuman and shocking" cruelties perpetrated aboard slave ships: slave traders beat, tortured, and starved captives, sometimes to death. Yet captives' pain was not Edwards's primary concern. Rather, he worried that shipboard cruelties spread moral contagion through the slavers inflicting pain, the people observing it, and the society permitting it. "Incessant and inhuman cruelties," Edwards explained, necessarily hardened people's hearts and depraved their manners. This corrupting effect was not limited to those who tormented captives: it occurred "in the masters of vessels, in the sailors, in the factors, in the proprietors of slaves, in their children, in the overseers, in the slaves themselves, and in all who habitually see these cruelties."[3] Edwards pitied suffering blacks, but he had no doubt that cruelties wreaked greater havoc on whites' souls and societies.

At first glance humaneness seems a decidedly selfless virtue, preeminently

altruistic, not self-regarding; "benevolence" was a desire for the good of *others*. Thus the tendency of Edwards and others to fixate on white morality, rather than black suffering, initially seems puzzling. But the puzzle becomes clearer if one traces the path by which pain became morally significant in Anglo-American culture. Edwards's fears about the moral poison of observing or perpetrating cruelty resonated with his contemporaries. Anglo-Americans had come to think of cruelty as morally important but not initially because they had devoted great energy to the problems of physical pain or the experience of that pain. Rather, they came to the problem of pain indirectly, through a tradition of Scottish moral philosophy that treated indifference to or delight in the misery of others as a sign and catalyst of moral and social breakdown. Americans imported this Scottish thought during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, teaching it in the moral philosophy classes that, by 1800 or so, typically served as the capstone course for college seniors. The importance of Scottish moral philosophy in American education made Scottish fears about cruelty deeply important to American moral thought.

Eighteenth-century moral objections to cruelty bore the mark of the philosophical disputes that spawned and nurtured them. These disputes only indirectly concerned bodily pain. Instead, moral objections to cruelty grew out of reflections on human nature and its capacity for malice or benevolence. Victims' experience of pain did not trouble moral philosophers, but the deliberate *infliction* of pain flummoxed them. A wish to bring pain to others suggested a deep capacity for malice lurking in the human heart, yet the same moral philosophers had committed themselves to the project of constructing an ethical system based on human nature. Cruelty undermined this project. Cruelty grew into a philosophical problem in the context of broad shifts in assumptions about the nature of God, human beings, and the moral world. The concept of cruelty never stood alone; it took shape in abstract debates distant from the groans of victims.

The prominent role of humaneness in moral theory grew out of an early eighteenth-century debate about human nature. Was human nature basically good or not? Did human beings ever truly put the good of others before their own good? The eighteenth century hardly invented the debate; trouble had begun brewing much earlier. In the wake of the reformations, Christians fought over the question of whether the original sin of Adam and Eve had left human nature fundamentally depraved. (And even those disputes revived much older debates about the relative roles of divine grace and human effort

in securing salvation.) Contact between Europeans and Native Americans lent urgency to questions about the moral and spiritual standing of the "natural" human being. In eighteenth-century Scotland, however, debates over human nature took a distinctive shape from the attempt to create a moral philosophy based on human nature.

The controversy boiled over with the 1714 publication of Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees, or, Private Vices, Public Benefits*. The book set the Scottish moral-philosophical world debating the usefulness of virtue. Mandeville argued that "the happiest and most flourishing Societies" depended not on virtue but on the "vilest and most hateful Qualities."[4] Ambition, pride, hypocrisy, and the selfish pursuit of private interests laid the foundation for prosperity. Selfishness, not altruism, encouraged socially beneficial behaviors.[5] Moralists might denounce pride, vanity, and the desire for luxury, but luxurious consumption created jobs, stimulated trade, and enriched the nation. Likewise, Mandeville looked skeptically at the appearance of selflessness and self-denying virtue. Even the seemingly selfless act of grabbing a baby about to fall into a fire, Mandeville contended, "only obliged our selves," by sparing rescuers the pain of watching a baby burn.[6] Mandeville's thesis that private vices served the public good shocked moral philosophers, and the scandal set the terms for eighteenth-century Scottish and American moral philosophy.[7] Angry moral philosophers insisted on the contrary: virtue was useful and pleasurable; vice spawned misery and poverty, not prosperity.

To defeat Mandeville, moral philosophers argued that human nature supported virtue. In 1725 a Scot, Francis Hutcheson, led the attack by rooting morality in natural passions, sentiments, and affections. God, Hutcheson explained, gave human beings a "moral sense" that perceived and relished the moral excellence of actions. God did not expect human beings to suppress their desires. Instead, God made virtue desirable "to excite our pursuit of it."[8] The moral sense naturally delighted in acting benevolently and helping others. Even better, virtue won rewards: the most virtuous acts spread the greatest happiness to the greatest numbers.[9] By insisting that God made virtue both useful and pleasurable, Hutcheson thwarted Mandeville's attack.

Against Mandeville's view of natural viciousness and selfishness, Hutcheson posited natural benevolence. Compassion provided a perfect example of humanity's natural goodness; it showed that human beings cared about others. Compassion thus loomed large in Hutcheson's challenge to Mandeville and to seventeenth-century pessimism about human nature.[10] For Hutcheson

compassion was an instinctive desire of human beings for the happiness of others. The mere sight of others' pains prompted visible "*Misery* and *Distress*" in observers' faces and a desire for the sufferer's relief.[11] Cruelty thus posed a philosophical problem. Those who desired to see pain in others acted out of malice, not benevolence; cruelty struck at the core of Hutcheson's views of human nature as benevolent. The benevolent dispositions that led human beings to virtue precluded a desire to bring pain to others. How, then, could Hutcheson deal with the reality that human beings did not always act benevolently?

Since compassion revealed a natural disposition for morality, Hutcheson cared more about proving the universality of compassion than showing that it reliably led to good actions.[12] Human beings, he explained in 1728, could mistake the causal relationship between acts and consequences.[13] Children even tortured animals unwittingly, out of "*Ignorance* of those signs of Pain" or "*Curiosity* to see the various Contortions of their Bodys."[14] Youngsters simply did not understand that they caused pain. In proving compassion's universality, Hutcheson limited its practical impact: compassion did not stop people from inflicting pain. Yet that qualification made cruelty an even more troublesome problem. By denying the existence of morally dubious instincts, Hutcheson made cruelty inexplicable, irrational, even monstrous.[15] True cruelty—a *desire* to cause suffering—symbolized ultimate moral breakdown. Morality depended on an innate desire for the good of others; true cruelty signified the absence of such a desire. Even if benevolent dispositions did not ensure good results, they mattered as markers of human capacity for morality.[16] Using compassion and cruelty as indicators of moral health mattered even more for Hutcheson's successors, who stressed the need to cultivate the moral sense.

Hutcheson spawned a long line of moral philosophers equally eager to root morality in natural desires. Scotland's moral philosophers, especially Hutcheson's student Adam Smith and Smith's rival David Hume, built moral systems on a foundation of human nature. Hume and others wanted to explain how a moral system could develop and function without externally imposed laws, whether those laws were dictated by revelation or inscribed as innate ideas in the mind or heart. If morality did not come directly from divine command, it must come from experience. Following the lead of John Locke, Hume suggested that human beings learned morality by associating patterns of conduct with pleasure or pain. Moral actions led to pleasurable

and useful consequences. Morality thus did not require strenuous self-denial, whatever moralists or clerics claimed. Instead, as Hume explained in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), human beings found the path to virtue by following "the true interests of mankind."[17] People could even safely indulge their passions; rather than seducing people from virtue, passions enticed them into morality. Hume personified virtue as an alluring woman whose "dismal dress" slipped off to reveal her "gentleness, humanity, beneficence, affability, nay, even at proper intervals, play, frolic, and gaiety."[18] Desire and pleasure reinforced morality.

The challenge for Hume, as for others, was to explain how pleasure-seeking individuals learned to behave socially. Sympathy provided an answer. Human beings naturally felt—literally—the feelings of others. This emotional contagion tied the happiness of each person to the good of others. An "unavoidable sympathy" with the happiness or misery of others taught human beings, through association of ideas, to behave in socially useful ways and to serve the public good.[19] A person "unaffected with the images of human happiness or misery," Hume explained, "must be equally indifferent to the images of vice and virtue."[20] After all, those who felt no distress at the pain of others would not learn to help others or behave morally. Sympathy, as Hume increasingly stressed, gave people an interest in making others happy.[21] Sympathy tethered human beings to society and educated them in morality. For Hume, as for Hutcheson, physical pain was not the primary concern. Rather, how someone reacted to the pain of others demonstrated his or her broader moral capacities or incapacities. A lack of compassion signaled disordered relations with one's fellow human beings.

The ties linking sympathy, morality, and sociability tightened in the hands of Hume's rival Adam Smith. Smith, who assumed the chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow in 1751, based his moral theory on sympathy. Like his mentor Hutcheson, Smith wanted to prove that human beings were not purely selfish, at least insofar as selfishness precluded concern for others. Sympathy provided the key by rendering the happiness of others essential for one's own.[22] Sympathy meant more than pitying those who suffered; Smith's sympathy was the ability to share the feelings of someone else by imagining oneself in his or her situation.[23] Fellow feeling offered a vantage point beyond one's immediate self-interest and wove autonomous individuals into a harmonious society and economy.[24] Sympathy also made people moral. Smith's sympathy was no indiscriminate contagion of passion; spectators

only shared the passions that seemed appropriate when they imagined themselves in a particular situation.[25] These limits of sympathy grounded moral judgment. Observers, real or imaginary, judged actions and actors based on the extent to which the observer could sympathize with the passions of the actor or the acted upon.[26] Moreover, people learned to judge and moderate their own behavior by imagining themselves as an "impartial spectator" of their actions.[27] Sympathy thus moderated self-interest and gave people a stake in making others happy.

Smith helped make pain and cruelty morally significant because he modeled sympathy on reactions to others' pain. He illustrated sympathy by analyzing how spectators reacted to the sight of someone being tortured. Through sight and imagination, he explained, "we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments," even feeling a weaker version of the sufferer's feelings.[28] Smith attached no particular moral merit to this vicarious experience of pain—it was part of human nature—but morality depended on the functioning of sympathy. The person who suppressed the natural sorrow arising at the sight of another's pain (or, worse, took delight in it) also suppressed the sympathy that grounded morality and sociability. Those who pitied sufferers, in contrast, demonstrated a capacity for morality and human connection.

Pain itself played only a supporting role to the functioning of sympathy. Smith's interest fell on the moral processes of the sympathetic spectator rather than a victim's experience. Spectators' reactions provided a window into their souls. Moralists thus analyzed the morality of actors and reactions of observers, not the rights of victims to be free from their torments. The imperative to sympathize even overshadowed the demand to relieve pain; Hutcheson had remarked that crowds at gladiatorial spectacles pitied the pain that they unknowingly helped cause.[29] The gaze of the eighteenth-century spectator focused less often on the suffering victim than on the heart of the spectator vicariously sharing the victim's torments.[30]

Collectively, Scottish moral theorists made cruelty matter because they tried to root morality in a benevolent human nature. Scottish morality required no massive suppression of desires. Passions, once a primary source of moral frailty, now became a crucial support for morality. But if morality depended on the passions, it became crucial for human nature to be as benevolent and sociable as philosophers claimed.[31] Passions must be rightly ordered, serving benevolence rather than selfishness. Therein lay the rub. Moralists' reliance on sociable and benevolent passions fueled anxiety about

the problem of disordered or malevolent passions. Moralists thus used reactions to pain to analyze the orientation of passions. Compassion affirmed that human passions served morality. But if people took pleasure in the pain of others, human desires could not be trusted; cruelty undermined the project of proving that human nature and human desires led to morality. Claims for the natural goodness of human nature spawned a horror of any malevolent desire lurking in the human breast.[32]

The persistent recourse of moralists to compassion to prove their claims about human nature made cruelty evidence of moral breakdown, even unfitness for society. In 1751 William Hogarth's engravings *The Four Stages of Cruelty* depicted the transformation of the aptly named Tom Nero from a childish tormentor of dogs and cats into a hardened murderer. The final, cautionary engraving portrayed the "reward of cruelty": the medical dissection of Nero's executed corpse. Hogarth's main concern was neither animals nor their pain.[33] Rather, the problem was Nero's delight in *inflicting* that pain; that delight corrupted him, setting him on a path to the worst immorality. Nero kills his pregnant lover in the third engraving, "Cruelty in Perfection." Childish cruelty created adult moral monsters, for "tortur'd Victims bleeding shew, / The Tyrant in the Boy."[34] His "tortur'd Victims" were a window into Nero's disordered, malevolent soul.

Pain thus became an important problem in moral philosophy indirectly; the moral light shining on the problem of pain was refracted through myriad concerns about human nature and the nature of morality. Moral concern about pain did not grow directly out of the problem of physical pain; instead, moral concern about pain took root in reflections on the human capacity for morality and sociability. Cruelty, not the experience of suffering, stood at the heart of the matter; like Quakers, moral philosophers worried less about the experience of sufferers than the evils of inflicting that pain. Inflicting pain—or even reacting to its infliction with indifference—signaled the corruption of human nature. This attempt to build a moral system on human nature made cruelty important.

The Divine Design of Benevolence

In 1808, when Thomas Clarkson recounted the history of the abolition of the slave trade, he attributed the rise of antislavery to the outpouring of a divine spirit of "practical benevolence and love."[35] Clarkson was hardly alone

in explaining antislavery—or humanitarianism more broadly—as an outgrowth of new views on benevolence.[36] Moralists' growing confidence in human benevolence reflected and reinforced broader shifts in thinking about the nature of God, God's will, and God's creation. Moral concern about the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain took root in a new vision of benevolence as the core not only of human nature and virtue but also of God's nature and creation.

By itself Scottish moral philosophy might not have succeeded in placing cruelty at the center of American moral thinking, had religious perceptions of God not also shifted. Scottish plans for building morality on unredeemed human nature jarred with the traditional theologies of many Reformed (Calvinist) Protestants. Reformed Protestants emphasized God's sovereignty and natural human inability, and they stressed the role of divine command and revelation in morality. Where Hutcheson placed benevolence at the core of human nature, the Presbyterian Jonathan Edwards (Sr.) insisted that depravity defined human nature without God's grace.[37] Yet Christianity was also transforming during the eighteenth century. By the end of the century Scottish moral philosophy and Christianity, including Presbyterianism, had joined together to reshape American moral thinking.

Shifts in eighteenth-century Protestantism—especially changing perceptions of God—helped pushed benevolence to the center of Anglo-American Christianity. For many Protestants, God morphed from an inscrutable sovereign into a benevolent creator wanting only human happiness—on human terms. Benevolence and humanitarianism became central components of Christ's mission. With striking frequency Americans and Britons described Christ as the preeminent humanitarian who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Theologically, Christ remained the savior of the world, but paeans to Jesus's earthly benevolence could eclipse Christ's salvific role, giving that divine mission a decidedly terrestrial feel.

As the divine nature shifted, so did God's role in morality. First, God's benevolence became a model for human action; ministers stressed the moral duty of spreading the happiness that God so ardently desired. But a second shift ran deeper, reshaping the structure of moral law. God could no longer rule arbitrarily over creation, demanding unquestioning obedience to His inscrutable will. The mists of inscrutability melted. Revelation cast light on God's logic, but people could know and understand God's will through nature. Rather than emphasizing the duty of unquestioning obedience, many

moralists and ministers now stressed the earthly delight that attended obedience. God calibrated moral laws with natural, God-given desires. Anthony Walke, an Episcopal minister in Virginia, mused in 1791 that God designed religion "to warm & cheer the human Mind, / To make Men happy, good, & wise."[38] Divine commands doubled as a manual for earthly happiness.[39]

In America, talk of God's benevolence abounded. The extent and precise shape of this theological shift varied widely, but the emphasis on benevolence sounded across denominations. Even firm devotees of God's absolute sovereignty and inscrutability stressed divine benevolence alongside divine sovereignty. God's benevolence, likewise, increasingly took a terrestrial turn. Jonathan Edwards (Sr.) had famously described "true virtue" as "benevolence to Being in general"; a new generation of his followers reinterpreted this true virtue in terms of spreading earthly happiness to other creatures.[40] Edwards's true virtue meant loving and glorifying God, without regard for oneself or one's family; God created the universe to bring glory to Himself, not to please creatures. But Edwards's successors, particularly Samuel Hopkins, reinterpreted this theocentric concept of virtue. Selfless love for God became benevolence to God's *creatures* in general (as opposed to a self-regarding kindness for one's friends and family). True virtue was now "disinterested benevolence"—benevolence rooted in a divine love for all creatures rather than "particular affections" for oneself and friends. Disinterested benevolence dovetailed with a developing ethical universalism: people owed benevolence to the entire human race, not just those nearby.[41] This creative reinterpretation made benevolence a central category of Reformed Protestant morality. Instead of defining happiness in distinctively otherworldly terms, many Protestants accepted the premise that virtue would bring happiness in this life.

The growing conviction that God wanted human beings to enjoy life on earth had far-reaching moral implications; happiness—and the related concepts of pleasure and pain—revealed God's moral will. Few American Christians entirely shelved their Bibles in favor of the book of nature, but they also grew confident that the Ten Commandments only spelled out more clearly what a careful, theologically informed study of creation revealed. The idea that human beings could understand the moral law through nature was hardly new, but placing divine benevolence at the conceptual center gave the resulting moral code a distinctive shape. One could assess the moral quality of individual actions by analyzing their *earthly* consequences. Just as God willed human beings to be happy, people should seek the happiness of oth-

ers—and refrain from bringing them misery. God would not—could not—approve of actions intended to cause pain. Cruelty, in short, stood against everything that the benevolent God desired.

Moralists even devised entire moral systems premised on God's benevolence. In Britain God's benevolence provided a foundation for William Paley's religious strand of utilitarianism, laid out in his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) and *Natural Theology* (1802).[42] The Anglican divine and moral philosopher waxed poetic on the design of the natural and moral world. That design proved God's benevolence. Since God wanted happiness for creatures, people could gauge the morality of an action by assessing its tendency "to promote or diminish the general happiness."[43] Did an act aid or thwart God's benevolent aim of making creatures happy? Since God calibrated the rules of morality to produce happiness, outcomes of actions indicated God's will; deliberately causing pain contradicted God's will. Instead of relying on a moral sense to intuit the character of an action, morality depended on analyzing how well actions served God's benevolent desires. Paley and like-minded moralists thus carefully scrutinized the consequences of actions, using those consequences as peepholes into God's will. Paley deserved no prize for originality, but his clarity and precision gave his claims a wide impact; his works formalized and disseminated broadly held views. Americans widely read and plagiarized Paley; his claims echoed from many an American pulpit on Sundays.[44]

As Paley and others exalted earthly happiness as the natural outcome of morality, they nibbled away at the moral neutrality of inflicting needless pain. Yet it is not obvious that a focus on happiness implies concern about pain; Paley piously rejected the idea of reducing happiness to sensual pleasure or the absence of bodily pain. Still, he deliberately avoided defining happiness as a purely spiritual or mental state in opposition to the body. Instead, Paley defined happiness as a state in which the "aggregate of pleasure exceeds that of pain." He ranked pleasures and pains not by pitting body against soul but by arranging pleasures and pains on a scale of "continuance and intensity."[45] Sensual pleasures did not define happiness but only because they did not last long enough. Bodily pain counted in the calculus of happiness. Humanity could not avoid all pain, but actions that deliberately produced it for no good purpose defied God's benevolent will.

Although many moralists and ministers insisted on the primacy of the moral sense, conscience, or divine revelation, the focus on consequences

echoed broadly. Philosophical distinctions mattered, but a shared confidence in God's benevolence created significant similarities among disparate thinkers. Many ministers agreed that God rewarded virtue. At the very least, earthly rewards or punishments reinforced the commands of the moral sense or revelation. Despite feuding over the details of moral epistemology, moralists and ministers shared a commitment to making morality attractive. Exalting God's benevolence and emphasizing human happiness countered suspicions that morality was arbitrary—or, worse, impractical.

Moralists grafted divine benevolence onto other moral theories as an added incentive for morality. Americans often created hybrid moral theories, drawing on revelation, Scottish moral philosophy, and benevolence. Religion and moral philosophy both demanded benevolence and sympathy.[46] Americans directly imported Scottish moral philosophy, especially through the College of New Jersey at Princeton, where it supplemented distinctively Presbyterian commitments. In 1768 the college lured the Scottish moral philosopher John Witherspoon to assume the presidency and the duties of teaching moral philosophy.[47] Despite Witherspoon's Presbyterianism, his lectures on virtue stressed God's benevolence rather than his sovereignty. Although Witherspoon rejected an unabashedly utilitarian definition of virtue, he confidently asserted that morality produced pleasure and utility. "It is not duty because it is pleasing," Witherspoon insisted, "but pleasing because it is duty." He even warned that treating virtue as its own reward endangered morality; happiness followed virtue, now and eternally.[48] God had prudently and benevolently linked virtue to interest. Thus, Witherspoon explained, "I shall forfeit my interest if I neglect my duty."[49] If consulting revelation and self-interest did not suffice, God had prudently planted benevolent affections in the human breast. Witherspoon taught his students Adam Smith's principles of sympathy, which he saw as the moral sense under a new name.[50]

Samuel Stanhope Smith, Witherspoon's student and presidential successor, similarly appealed to revelation, the moral sense, sympathy, and God's benevolence to bolster moral obligation. Smith avoided the seeming inconsistency between theories by explaining that God protected morality by giving human beings several mutually reinforcing ways to learn God's will. Sympathy naturally drew human beings to virtue, but since virtue promoted happiness, human beings should also consider an act's tendency to create "lasting happiness or misery." Human beings should promote even the "smallest sources of enjoyment." Still, human happiness mattered too much to entrust it entirely

to the human ability to assess consequences accurately. Thus, God, "to attain his benevolent end," made people recognize the intrinsic good of the acts.[51]

This religious focus on consequences received widespread support because it drew on a common desire to make vice unappealing. Divisions among moral philosophers paled next to their shared horror of the idea that prosperity grew out of vice. God would not, could not, pit virtue against happiness or self-interest. In assuming this, moralists accepted the premise that consequences mattered in moral decision making. Rather than piously dismissing worldly pleasure as trivial next to salvation (or dangerous to it), moralists and ministers argued that the same path led to earthly happiness and eternal salvation.[52] Moralists thus took Mandeville's bait. They judged God by how well divine commands served human needs; God simply passed the test.

A fledgling humanitarianism took nourishment from the idea that God created a world in which moral acts properly ended in pleasure, not pain. Acts intended to inflict pain thus fell into disrepute. At the same time, a focus on consequences drew attention to the benevolence or malice of actors' intentions. Did an actor desire good or harmful consequences? Malicious people who cared little for human happiness showed their disregard for morality and God's benevolent will. The malice behind cruelty marked cruelty as true moral evil, a rejection of divine benevolence. The moral focus on both consequences and *intended* consequences spurred the growth of humanitarianism.

This strand of humanitarianism—unlike the Quaker variant—did not rely on self-denial. Quite the contrary. Doing one's duty served self-interest; the virtuous enjoyed more happiness than the "libertine."[53] In the paeans to benevolence a consistent second theme followed closely: that seeking the good of others also benefited oneself.[54] Benevolence, though seemingly an unselfish desire for the good of others, was the surest path to personal benefit. Moralists and ministers did not intend to elevate self-interest to a virtue; many shrank at the thought. Indeed, Hutcheson began by debunking Mandeville's claim that selfishness motivated morality. But neither would moralists stand by while Mandeville and his ilk claimed that thriving societies depended on a liberal dose of private vice. Even as moralists warned against selfishness, they insisted that self-regard reinforced morality. Hutcheson dismissed the motive of self-interest but added, "It is our truest *Interest* to be *virtuous*." (He noted the irony.)[55] True virtue—even benevolence—did not

mean self-denial. By 1800 interest and benevolence had intertwined so tightly that Samuel Stanhope Smith's Princeton students treated seriously the question: "Are any of our benevolent actions disinterested?"[56] Making morality attractive shifted the frameworks of moral thinking.

In the short term the elision of benevolence and self-interest sparked criticism of cruelty. Scottish and American moral philosophers conflated civilization and humanity, treating humaneness as the surest path to progress and prosperity. In doing so, they defined cruelty as irrational and counterproductive. Who could choose anything but benevolence when it cost so little and paid so richly? But over the long term the elision of interests and benevolence discouraged close scrutiny of actions that fit people's interests. Such assumptions also made cruelty unlikely; who would defy self-interest just to see someone suffer? The alleged irrationality of cruelty lent plausibility to an antebellum defense of slavery: that slave owners' economic interest protected slaves from cruelty. Relegating cruelty to the realm of illogic made cruelty easier to deny.[57]

Moral thought about pain stood at the edge of larger battles about the nature of human beings, God, and morality. The indirection of moral concern about pain mattered a great deal. Humanitarian concern about cruelty was never a straightforward, simple concern about pain or the experiences of victims. It was not pain, but objections to the deliberate and unnecessary *infliction* of pain, that provided the intellectual impulse of humanitarianism. These concerns shaped the paths that humanitarians took to reform. Humanitarianism was further complicated by its multiple origins. Objections to cruelty drew on competing, even contradictory, moral-philosophical and theological assumptions about the meaning and value of suffering. Humaneness took root not only in Quakers' exaltation of self-denial but also in claims for the harmony of self-interest, God's will, and human morality. The apparent simplicity of humanitarianism was deceptive; humanitarianism bore the mark of the moral, philosophical, and theological disputes that spawned it. Its hybrid origins played out in a series of tensions in how humanitarians approached the slavery debate.

Cruelty, Slavery, and "Admirable Sensibility"

By the late eighteenth century, the rhetoric of moralists and ministers sounded strikingly familiar notes in their exaltations of humaneness: no good

person deliberately inflicted pain on others, human nature rebelled at cruelty, and God frowned on cruelty. Rather than resting the duties of humaneness on a rational analysis of benevolence, ministers and moralists increasingly invoked the feelings and passions. Benevolence, after all, fulfilled the natural desires of human beings; why not enlist those desires to serve benevolence? But moralists remained uneasy about leaving morality to raw human nature. They praised the passions and affections as central to morality and religion (especially after the Great Awakening), even as they doubted that unregulated passions and affections always served morality. Novels provided grim warnings of the dangers of allowing oneself to be tossed like a leaf by the whimsical gusts of the passions.[58] But this suspicion of unregulated passions did not lead moralists to reject all the passions; instead, they insisted on proper ordering of those passions. The passions and self-love could serve the social good; they simply needed to be channeled to virtue instead of vice. Moralists, ministers, and novelists joined in a chorus of demands for the cultivation of the calm, soft, and moderated passions.[59]

Reformers' heightened anxiety about the passions made humaneness and cruelty key categories of moral thinking, and humanitarianism fed on efforts to reform the morals and manners of Anglo-Americans. Cruelty stood as a perfect example of the evils of unregulated passions. In Hannah Foster's *Coquette,* rakes who seduced women not only exhibited the "most violent emotions," but they were also cruel men who delighted in human misery.[60] Anglo-Americans' ancestors had long associated excessive physical violence with turbulent passions.[61] Now, as moralists placed increasing weight on the passions as the foundation of ethical action, practices of cruelty threatened to topple the entire edifice. For morality to rely on passions, they must be calm, gentle, and orderly; humaneness affirmed both the natural goodness of human beings and the moral value of the passions.

Reformers found an ideal model for the humanitarian with perfectly balanced and ordered passions: Jesus. As Americans expected benevolence from God, they also reimagined Jesus as a kindly and gentle humanitarian. Not only did Christ save souls; he had a soft, gentle character, ripe for human imitation. He exemplified the sympathy and virtuous passions that properly animated human morality. The Presbyterian Samuel Stanhope Smith waxed poetic on Christ's "admirable sensibility."[62] Christ, he explained, never "pretend[ed] to be superior to grief, to sympathy, to all the lovely sensibilities of the heart." The "sensibility of his heart" and "universal benevolence" neared

the top of Smith's listing of Christ's perfections.[63] These images of Christ, moreover, stood opposed to cruelty. Cruelty marked the brutalization of one's character—a turn not only against natural benevolence but also against the softer, refined sensibilities that human beings should develop. Christ would never sanction oppression, insisted Anthony Walke, an Episcopal minister in Virginia. Christ's life, he explained, "was one Series of humane and generous Actions. His Doctrines were as mild & gentle as his Deportment:—He instructed his Hearers to do Good to all."[64] Descriptions of Christ oozed with compassion, benevolence, and sympathy. A crucial part of Christ's mission had become to reform the manners and morals of his followers.

Painting Christ as a gentle, humane reformer of manners opened a path to attack the harshness of slavery and the trade. Slavery and its cruelty fostered a character starkly opposed to the humane sensibility of Christ and his followers. The "heavenly Principle" of Love, Walke asserted, "soothes the Mind, softens the Manners, & calms each turbulent Passion." It could admit nothing "harsh, cruel, & unpleasing."[65] No precept or trait of Christ's character, Walke contended, could support the inhumanity of slavery. The slave trade destroyed an Edenic tranquility in Africa, where Africans lived in "Ease & Content" akin to "the Golden Age."[66] Slavery brutalized the manners of everyone involved, and "their Tempers are mutually ruffled."[67] The evil of slavery lay not in subordination but in the brutal tyranny of that subordination, which destroyed the softer virtues.[68] Walke associated morality with calm passions and gentle deportment. Calm and gentle rule contrasted with the harshness and violence of tyranny, particularly in an age concerned with reforming male manners and domestic government.[69] Legitimate rule meant imitating Christ's "mild & gentle" model; slavery destroyed that mildness and gentleness.

Other Americans leaped on the inconsistency of slavery with civilized, Christian manners and morals. How, as Patrick Henry put it, could "Christianity, whose chief Excellence consists in softening the human Heart, in cherishing and improving its finer feelings," encourage slavery? Henry balked at freeing his slaves, yet his discomfort is telling. He recognized his hypocrisy; he could not reconcile slavery with "a Religion the most humane, mild, meek, gentle and generous."[70] The harshness of slavery jarred with the mildness and gentleness of deportment and character expected of civilized Christians.

The harshness of slavery also disrupted the balance of passions necessary for good character. Reason or benevolent passions must predominate over

disordered, violent passions. Elite society particularly associated disorderly or unregulated passions with the lower classes and "inferior" racial groups.[71] Even more crucially, disordered passions spawned immorality. Samuel Stanhope Smith warned that the person "under the influence of passion" is not "properly master of himself."[72] Thomas Jefferson famously described slavery as a "perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions," corrupting slaveholders and their children. "The man must be a prodigy," Jefferson added, "who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances."[73] The chains of the enslaved mirrored the enslavement of slaveholders to their passions. Jonathan Edwards Jr. argued that slaves lay at the mercy of slaveholders "intoxicated sometimes with liquor, sometimes with passion."[74]

Sympathizing with suffering slaves, in contrast, revealed the moral rule of gentle, mild passions over rough, harsh, or disordered passions. Sympathy showed the moral and spiritual sensibility of the spectator. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, castigated those involved in the trade: "Do you never *feel* another's pain? Have you no Sympathy? No sense of human woe? No pity for the miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breasts, or the bleeding side and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, was you a stone, or a brute?" Such insensibility to suffering also exposed spiritual insensibility. Quoting the Bible, Wesley warned "And today, if you hear [God's] voice, harden not your heart."[75] Biblical miscreants hardened their hearts against God's word or commands; slaveholders hardened their hearts to the soft virtues of sympathy and sensibility, as well as to God's word. Sympathizing with slave suffering, in contrast, revealed a sensibility at once refined and deeply spiritual. The language of the passions gave slavery's critics a way to denounce cruelty, even as they focused on the souls and morals of white Americans rather than the suffering victims' endurance of that pain.

As white critics of slavery attacked cruelty, they linked the pain inflicted on slaves' bodies to the moral and spiritual injuries whites inflicted on themselves by perpetrating or observing cruelty. In an eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, bodies took on heightened meaning. Bodies displayed and gave form to interior sensibilities; they revealed otherwise invisible moral and emotional states. The developing emphasis on the nervous system in medicine, particularly Scottish medicine, helped turn the body into a signifier of one's inner emotional or moral state. Blushes, sighs, and quivers demonstrated a capacity to feel the distress of others. Slavery's critics expected slaves' bodies to evoke physical responses in the bodies of white observers,

and these responses—or lack thereof—revealed the moral and spiritual character of whites. Exposure to the pain of others ought to trigger a sympathetic reaction in the body; a moral spectator's nerves vibrated in sympathetic harmony with the victim's. Antislavery writers thus interpreted sympathetic suffering in the bodies of observers as a sign of morality, and writers stressed their own physical reactions to cruelty. At the sight of an enslaved man enduring death by exposure to hungry birds and insects, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur "found myself suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror; my nerves were convulsed; I trembled, I stood motionless, involuntarily contemplating the fate of this negro."[76] Recalling his investigation of slave ships, Thomas Clarkson reported that "cruel accounts" brought him "awake in an agitated state. . . . I looked thin; my countenance became yellow."[77] Activists' bodily reactions indicated their moral sensitivity, whereas insensibility—a lack of sympathetic physical and emotional reaction—exposed inner moral disorder.[78]

Slave bodies even served as outward, physical signs of slaveholders' moral disorder. For Thomas Clarkson white morality revealed itself not only in observers' bodily reactions to slave pain but also in the suffering bodies of the enslaved. The backs of slaves bore "inhuman marks of passion, despotism, and caprice."[79] Their wounds and scars bore testimony, written in flesh, to the internal, invisible moral disorder of the slaveholder. Benjamin Rush warned that slaves' earthly pain foreshadowed the hellish torments awaiting cruel slaveholders in the afterlife: "for every act of unnecessary severity he inflicts upon his slaves, he shall suffer tenfold in the world to come."[80] The misery of enslaved people embodied and mirrored their owners' disordered passions and insensibility.

The bodily injury done to slaves pointed to the spiritual injury to the souls of white owners and observers. Writers increasingly viewed cruelty as an assault on the feelings of observers as much as the bodies of the enslaved. White sensibility took center stage in a much-quoted excerpt from William Cowper's *Task* (1785):

> . . . My ear is pain'd
> My Soul is sick with ev'ry day's report
> Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd
> There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
> It does not feel for man.[81]

Significantly, Cowper drew attention first to his own pain at learning of the cruelty done to others; cruelty injured him spiritually, perhaps physically, as much as it injured the victims. Cowper's attention then shifted to the unfeeling hearts of slaveholders and observers who perpetrated or viewed such cruelties without blushing. When speaking directly of slaves being whipped, he again emphasized the unfeeling observers and the slaveholder who inflicted stripes on human beings "that mercy with a bleeding heart / Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast."[82] The real blood of enslaved blacks gave way to the blood emanating from mercy's bleeding heart. Cowper elided the bodily injury to slaves and the moral injury to observers and perpetrators, weighing the scale of importance in favor of the latter. The victim's human identity mattered, but mercy also wept over cruelty to animals.[83] As Cowper called for compassion, he wrote that he "had much rather be myself the slave / And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him."[84] Moral injury to whites trumped blacks' bodily suffering.

Cowper joined a host of other critics in denouncing the effect of cruelty on white sensibility, manners, and morals. As reformers called for Americans to cultivate their soft, gentle passions and moderate the turbulent ones, cruelty undermined that process. In a widely circulated pamphlet, Arthur Lee attacked slavery for its depraving effects on the free, "steeling their hearts against the laudable feelings of virtue and humanity." Slavery, he explained, shocked humanity and violated Christianity.[85] In the "horrid means" of enslaving Africans, Anthony Walke argued, "the most cruel Violence is thereby done to the Rules of Justice & the Feelings of Humanity."[86] Violence to the feelings of humanity eclipsed the violence done to the bodies of slaves. The cruelty of slavery mattered because it injured the moral character and sensibilities of perpetrators and observers.

Cruelty acquired great cultural force by encouraging anxiety about personal and cultural standing. Americans, drawing on Scottish ideas, cast cruelty in opposition to refined civilization. Just as Christianity softened the morals and manners of Christians, civilization produced refined sensibilities. Cruelty cast doubt on an entire culture's claims to civilization. The logic of Scottish conjectural history intensified Americans' anxieties about perpetrating or tolerating cruelty. In this framework, modern civilization was the most recent stage in the linked development of refinement, culture, arts and sciences, religion, and, crucially, commerce.[87] Material and commercial progress echoed progress in manners and morals. Slavery and its cruelty were

relics of a barbarous past, unbefitting a refined, commercially developed, and intellectually advanced Christian civilization. Although Patrick Henry owned slaves, the appearance of slavery in an enlightened stage of civilization perturbed him; slavery's existence clashed with "high Improvements in Arts, Science, and refin'd Morality." Slavery's reappearance even undermined the trajectory of civilization and American claims to it: slavery was "a species of Violence and Tyranny which our more rude and barbarous, but honest Ancestors detested."[88]

The cruelty of slavery—and especially the cruelty of the slave trade—thus posed quandaries for the many Americans schooled in Scottish conjectural history. Commerce should have moralized and civilized their society. Commerce included not only economic exchange but intellectual and social exchange as well. Modern commerce should have destroyed slavery, a relic of barbarism; modern commerce should not have supported a slave trade.[89] The barbarism of the slave trade subverted commerce's civilizing function and cast the civility of commercial society into question.[90] Thomas Clarkson argued that regulating the slave trade would never succeed because regulations would cut profits too much. Only abolition—not commerce—"would improve the *system of morals* both in Africa and at home, and the *manners of both countries*."[91] In contrast, commerce in human beings could not moralize and refine its participants.

Slaveholding cruelty also fit awkwardly in the Scottish model because refinement and sensitivity to suffering developed together. Adam Smith contrasted the civilized virtues of humanity with primitive virtues based on "self-denial and the command of the passions." Material progress reduced the need to deny oneself pleasure and encouraged sympathetic concern for others. The "savage," in contrast, "expects no sympathy." Rigorous control of emotions and passions and a hardy insensibility to suffering suited the "savage" culture, while humanity and "delicate sensibility" suited a refined culture.[92] Commercial advancement, refinement of morals, and increased sensitivity went hand in hand. By 1787 Americans even showed their refinement and humanity simultaneously by purchasing Wedgwood china depicting a kneeling slave, imploring "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?"—or a range of spin-off products.[93] An absence of sympathy cast that civilized refinement into doubt.

Language itself strengthened the antagonism between civilization and cruelty in moral thought. Scottish thinkers—and countless others—used *sav-*

age and *barbarous* to denote specific stages of cultural development, but these words slipped off their tongues to describe cruel tormenters as well. They defined cruelty as a primitive behavior that was radically at odds with the refined morality of an advanced civilization. Cruelty belonged to the untamed wilds beyond the pale of civilization, to savage animals and savage people. Bestial traits similarly elided linguistically with cruelty. "Inhuman," "brutal," and "ferocious" described cruel people and wild animals and, not infrequently, uncivilized peoples. Cruelty at once undermined refined civilization and human nature.[94]

Such associations provided fodder for antislavery activists eager to contrast slave-trading savagery and civilized refinement. Speaking in the voice of an African "ravish'd" from his homeland, the English poet William Shenstone wondered, "What savage race protects this impious gain?" He continued, juxtaposing animalistic ferocity and the polish of civilization:

> When the grim lion urg'd his cruel chace,
> When the stern panther fought his midnight prey,
> What fate reserv'd me for this christian race?
> O race more polish'd, more severe than they!"[95]

An American poet noted that an "(inhuman, tyger-hearted Brood) / Prowl over Africa for Human Blood."[96] Attributing animalistic or savage qualities to the slave trader highlighted the inconsistency of slavery with modern refinement and civilization.

By the late eighteenth century Americans attributed vast cultural meaning to cruelty. Cruelty not only poisoned morality and undermined the delicate balance of virtuous passions in individuals, but cruelty also even arrested and reversed the moral progress of their entire civilization. Such concerns were self-referential, but they made fertile soil for a sprouting humanitarianism. White Americans used cruelty as a mirror into their own souls and the soul of their civilization. They did not like what they saw.

Sympathetic Imagination

As the passions grew in moral importance, Scottish moral-philosophical theories of sympathy gave new meaning to the biblical "golden rule" to love one's neighbor as oneself. Scottish moral theory turned imaginative projection into a critical tool for morality and the glue of a well-functioning society.

Moral judgment, as Adam Smith explained, grew out of sympathy, which he explained as an ability to project oneself imaginatively into another person's situation and feelings.[97] Imaginative projection allowed actors to view their behavior through the eyes of an impartial observer—or from the perspective of the recipient of their own actions. Within this framework the biblical golden rule took on an imaginative cast, relying on imaginative projection. People should not simply treat others in the way they wanted to be treated; they should *imagine* how they would feel if roles were reversed.

Slavery's critics took precisely this tack. What if slaveholders were the victims, not the perpetrators, of slavery's violence?[98] In an imagined dialogue, Samuel Hopkins asked a slaveholder whether he treated his slaves "as you would wish others would treat your own children, were they slaves in a strange land?"[99] After 1785 the enslavement of white travelers in the African "Barbary States" gave new force to these questions. Such enslavements spawned popular "white slave" narratives detailing their sufferings, concretizing the demand for imaginative role reversal across color lines.[100]

Critics of slavery urged slaveholders to imagine themselves not only as slaves but also as observers of their own behavior. The impartial spectator was a fixture of Adam Smith's moral theory: to judge one's own conduct, one should imagine oneself in the place of an impartial observer.[101] Samuel Hopkins insisted that slaveholders could not judge their own treatment of slaves; "an impartial, attentive by-stander will be shocked with it, while the master is wholly insensible of any wrong."[102] Others invoked a divine spectator who observed human events with an "impartial eye."[103] Anthony Walke cautioned Virginians that "it would be wise to consider Ourselves as Spectators of our own conduct" because God, after all, looked on with "an equal Eye."[104] God was the ultimate impartial spectator who both saw everything and transcended all partiality.

Spectatorship, whether divine or human, mattered a great deal. The sensible—especially visible—signs of cruelty sparked sympathy. The *sight* of a whip descending on a victim's back produced sympathetic cringes in the backs of observers imagining it on their own backs. Yet the dynamics of sympathy and spectatorship created tensions in American attitudes toward slaveholding cruelty. Not only did slavery's critics object to cruelties beyond the immediate presence of many white Americans, but such critics also tended to treat slaveholding cruelties as distant occurrences. Local defensiveness (and sensitivity about the implications of cruelty for a culture's claims to

civilization) encouraged even some deeply committed antislavery writers to dwell on inhumanity elsewhere. The cruelties of West Indian slavery, the horrors of the trade and Middle Passage, or, for northerners, the brutality of slavery farther south took rhetorical precedence over local slavery.[105]

Yet distance posed problems. In moral theory, distance should have weakened sympathy. Nearby sufferers, as Hume had explained, garnered the strongest sympathy.[106] Adam Smith criticized "whining and melancholy moralists" expecting "commiseration for those miseries which we never saw, which we never heard of." One had no duty beyond good wishes toward those "altogether out of the sphere of our activity."[107] Distance might even destroy sympathy; J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur slipped between blaming the cruelty of Charleston's absentee slaveholders on their hard-heartedness and on the distance; they "neither see, hear, nor feel for the woes of their poor slaves. . . . The cracks of the whip . . . are far too distant from the gay Capitol to be heard."[108] Yet sympathy, even across distance, mattered. Sympathy established white morality and drew moral boundaries between the benevolent and cruel.[109] The challenge, for antislavery activists, was to reestablish the moral immediacy of spectatorship.

Imagination stepped in to counter the damaging effects of distance. By recreating sensory connections and spectatorship, imagination put distant suffering within the "sphere of our activity." Imagination turned white Americans and Britons into vicarious spectators of distant cruelty. Antislavery authors commanded readers to imagine "scenes" of cruelty; writers evoked sensory details to aid readers. Benjamin Rush led his readers on an imaginative journey from Africa to a sugar plantation (far from his Philadelphia), conjuring up images of slave traders who whipped pregnant slaves or tore apart weeping couples. Despite his appeal to imagination, Rush assured readers that such scenes were "taken from real life."[110] The cruelties of slavery, frequently banished to distant climes, allowed sympathy to fade; only imagination, prompted by descriptions of cruelty, could revive sympathy. As morality increasingly relied on the passions, affections, and sentiments, imagination gained force because it operated on them. Imagination could "awaken social, benevolent, and virtuous sentiments."[111]

Theater and spectacle likewise imaginatively recreated moral spectatorship.[112] Playwrights literally staged scenes of cruelty and suffering, but poets and pamphleteers also borrowed the tools of spectacle and theatricality. Writers staged slave pain as a theatrical spectacle for people to see, hear, and

then feel through sympathy. Yet, while the audiences were urged to pity suffering slaves, that pity often took shape from imaginative projection into the experiences of observers rather than from sympathy with the enslaved sufferers themselves.[113] In 1791 Zephaniah Swift described the mournful sound of thousands of slaves heading toward "the region destined to be the theatre of their wretchedness."[114] Even as Swift described slaves' misery, the phrase "theatre of their wretchedness" interjected spectators who observed that suffering from positions of comfort and safety. William Roscoe described a chain of captive Africans as a "spectacle of woe" and introduced his poem *The Wrongs of Africa* (1788) by calling teary-eyed spectators out of theaters of fancy to "weep with me substantial ills."[115] Even as Roscoe sniffed at the sensibilities of theatergoers weeping over imaginary sufferers, he tapped into theater's moral structure of sympathetic spectatorship.[116] Pain evoked a spectator's sympathy; victims served to establish spectators' morality.

Sympathetic imagination played multiple roles, and these roles worked at cross-purposes. At one level, sympathy encouraged whites to identify with enslaved Africans; some authors imagined themselves as slaves, and sentimental plays and poems featured suffering black protagonists who called for white compassion. Yet sympathy also grew out of a distinction (reinforced by theatricality) between the moral spectator and the sufferer.[117] The persistent recourse to spectacle and sentimentality also strengthened a moral focus on the behavior of actors and the reactions of observers. The torments of victims mattered, but that anguish served to prompt sympathy or indict those who failed to sympathize. In 1797 the English translation of the German playwright August von Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves* used an epigraph from Roscoe's poem, moving swiftly from slaves' feeling of pain to the unfeeling hearts of observers:

> Form'd with the same capacity of pain
> The same desire of pleasure and of ease,
> Why feels not man for man?[118]

Slave pain provided the evidence to arraign the unfeeling public.

Especially in pamphlets, a spectatorial stance limited the ability of sympathy to tap into the interior life of the enslaved. Even when polemicists invoked the interior, emotional torments of enslaved Africans, they used the language of visible, external cruelties. Rush's account of slaves' misery appealed to the visible and audible signs of cruelty rather than the feelings or

internal experiences of enslaved people. Even the anguish of a sundered couple became spectacle: "hear their cries, and see their looks of tenderness at each other." Readers would "see" an overseer approach exhausted slaves: "He lifts up his whip, while streams of blood follow every stroke."[119] Understanding cruelty through the senses (particularly sight and hearing) made it concrete, an important consideration for activists. Yet portraying the experience of suffering through spectacle, rather than the interiority of sufferers, kept attention on observers and their reactions. Readers could imagine themselves as slaves, yet antislavery sympathy most often worked through reactions to pain's sensible signs; sympathy downplayed slave interiority to make room for observers' projected interiority.[120] The *actual* feelings of slaves yielded to spectators' imaginations.

Humaneness in Practice and the Ambiguities of Cruelty

By the late eighteenth century, moral concern about cruelty played an vital role in Anglo-American culture. Yet the fact that humaneness neglected the victims mattered a great deal as people attempted to put it into practice. Whites cared about cruelty to blacks because of the implications for themselves. Turning cruelty into a sign of fundamental moral breakdown trained moral attention on slavery's cruelty and even raised suspicions about the individuals and societies that calmly observed that cruelty. Yet that focus on moral character also created tensions in how whites approached the practical issue of slavery. The logic that led some people to criticize slavery made others reluctant to label their neighbors and compatriots uncivilized or morally bankrupt. Ambivalence shaded the application of the moral language of cruelty from the start.

Eighteenth-century Americans, even proslavery ones, had little trouble admitting that slaves suffered, and they rarely claimed that slavery made slaves happy. Admitting to cruelty was another matter. Accusations cut deeply at individuals' claims to refinement and culture. Slaveholders defiantly insisted on their civility, their refined manners, their upstanding morals. When George Whitefield labeled cruel slaveholders "Monsters of Barbarity" in 1740, an offended South Carolinian responded that extending such charges "against the *generality*" of slaveholders was not only unfounded, but it was also indictable slander.[121] Yet that defensiveness often lay in a desire to defend not slavery itself but the slaveholders' personal claims to moral refinement. Cru-

elty, not slave happiness, proved the real issue, and slaveholders' desire to guard their reputations fired their resistance. During a trial of five slaves accused of attempted murder in 1798, accusations surfaced that the owner had "cruelly whipped" a slave to death three years earlier. His former overseer attacked "the injustice and cruelty" of "unfounded slanders," even as he described the whipping he had himself inflicted.[122] Even those who defended slavery on ideological grounds cited the injury done by accusations of cruelty: Richard Nisbet's 1773 scriptural defense of slavery was a response to "he that filches from me my good Name."[123]

Accusations of cruelty mattered because they easily morphed into larger attacks on a culture as uncivilized or unrefined. The British activist Thomas Clarkson leveled one of his sharpest critiques against "the merciless Dutch," who "enjoy their [slaves'] pain."[124] Richard Nisbet of Philadelphia (a former resident of the West Indies) fumed at Benjamin Rush that a "few instances" of cruelties had occurred, but, he asked, was "that a reason to stigmatize every West-Indian, with the name of murderer and monster, and represent him as dead to every kind of feeling?"[125] Regional competition also fueled charges. Long before slavery disappeared from northern states, northerners assumed that true cruelty thrived farther south. Southern slaveholders pushed cruelty into the distance, insisting that they treated slaves more humanely than did West Indian owners. The American Revolution exacerbated these distancing tendencies by pitting Americans and Britons against each other in a battle over their relative humanity. A Rhode Island slave trader claimed that his captives, destined for the United States, would live happier lives than British or French slaves.[126] National and regional competition fostered such accusations, and in the process, reinforced the idea that cruelty brought shame upon a locality.[127]

Rivalries encouraged people to accuse others of cruelty (or worse cruelty), but regional pride also blunted the force of accusations of cruelty locally. Even antislavery writers exhibited this defensiveness; they were only marginally more willing than slaveholders to label local cultures inhumane—and therefore uncivilized. Antislavery writers denounced cruelty but tended to treat it as a distant matter. In Connecticut Zephaniah Swift contrasted West Indian slavery with the "mildness and clemency" of North American slavery, which was more humane because of "the characters of their masters."[128] In 1782 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur suggested that enslaved blacks in the "northern provinces" were "fat, healthy, and hearty" and "happier than many of the lower class of whites."[129] His aim, however, was not to defend slavery

but to contrast northern humanity with the cruelty of Charleston's slaveholders, who "neither see, hear nor feel for the woes of their poor slaves."[130] After attending a Scottish university, the Virginian Arthur Lee griped in 1764 about the "calumny and misrepresentation" of British claims that American slaves were "very barbarously treated." Americans were as refined, polished, humane, and hospitable as Europeans, if not more so. Apart from the "inexpressible misery" of slavery itself, the conditions of enslaved Americans compared favorably with those of the "Scotch or Irish vulgar." Lee criticized slavery, but he also defended America from charges of cruelty.[131] Local and patriotic defensiveness diminished the significance of local suffering and highlighted distant cruelty.

The ambivalence that marked these defensive comparisons provided fodder for proslavery arguments. Given the widespread assumption that slavery entailed misery, apologists could not easily deny that enslaved blacks suffered. Defenders of the slave trade used geographic and cultural comparisons to dilute American or British *responsibility* for slaves' anguish; comparative arguments reduced that pain from cruelty to routine suffering. Defenders of the slave trade frequently compared life in slavery to life in Africa, claiming that slavery saved Africans from a land of savagery and cruelty. Such comparisons dismissed the relevance of slave pain and reduced the need to defend slavery. Next to a life of unmitigated cruelty, slavery could seem tolerable. The slave trader John Brown protested to his antislavery brother that the captives fared better than Africans left behind.[132] As one Harvard student argued in 1773, removing Africans from "brutality, wretchedness, and misery, . . . to this land of light, humanity, and Christian knowledge, is to them so great a blessing; however faulty any individuals may have been in point of unnecessary cruelty."[133] One could blame "individuals" for excesses (which regulations could stop), but the vast superiority of American humanity to African cruelty pushed white cruelty into insignificance.[134]

Likewise, defenders of the slave trade attributed slavery to African savagery, cruelty, or wars rather than pinning the responsibility on white slave traders. Captives transported from Africa, apologists claimed, were war captives or had been previously enslaved; white traders bore no guilt for the original act of enslavement. Defenders of the slave trade emphasized that Africans—not Europeans—actually enslaved other Africans, and Europeans bought those Africans from their captors; Africans, not whites, thus bore responsibility for the cruelties involved in enslaving free Africans. One Afri-

can king, Georgian William Knox claimed, chopped off the heads of five hundred captives, rather than accept a low bid for their purchase. Knox cited the case both to show the "shocking despotism" of African leaders and to prove that white traders did not "steal" their captives.[135] Where Quakers stressed that the demand for slaves was the main cause of African wars—and argued that traders often fomented wars—the trade's defenders stressed Africans' roles. Doing so shifted responsibility for slave pain. The slave trade's defenders did not need to deny that enslaved Africans suffered; defenders merely had to attribute the guilt for it to the cruelty of a distant, savage people. Defenders of the slave trade likewise emphasized African cruelty to suggest that even if enslaved Africans suffered in American slavery, enslaved Africans still benefited. Africans, claimed the Briton Gordon Turnbull in 1786, were "perfectly reconciled" to exchanging their African owners for European or American ones.[136] The Atlantic slave trade even rescued Africans from other cruelty. For fellow Briton Thomas Thompson, slavery originated in "a principle of humanity"; it was a "milder way" of dealing with war captives than killing them.[137] Provided that whites did not engage in excessive cruelty themselves, their slaves' misery was neither "shocking" nor reprehensible.[138]

Proslavery comparisons between America and Africa similarly exploited tensions in the opposition between civilization and cruelty. Scottish theories linked progress in civilization, compassion, and sensibility; cruelty belonged to the savage state. Even as slavery's critics used these associations between cruelty and the savage state to attack slavery, their opponents used the associations to defend the slave trade. By describing Africa as a land of cruelty, savagery, and barbarism, apologists justified taking Africans from it; Africans left a state of "brutality" for a land of "humanity." Notably, the distinctions between brutality and humanity (or humanity and inhumanity) also subtly linked Africans with animals. Painting Africa as a land of unmitigated cruelty thus served vital rhetorical purposes. The Middle Passage did not, as antitrade activists claimed, undermine the Christianity, refinement, or civilized status of whites; it brought savage Africans to civilization and refinement.

Such rhetorical strategies kindled a hot debate about Africans' characters. The argument was not simply about Africans' equality or inferiority but also about their humaneness or cruelty and, in turn, the relative benevolence or cruelty of slavery. Claims of "natural cruelty" diminished Africans' capacity to be wronged by white inhumanity.[139] Could it, after all, be wrong to do to

Africans what they did to each other? Antislavery polemicists countered images of primitive savagery with ones of peacefulness, docility, and natural innocence. They imagined Africa as a once-Edenic paradise destroyed by slave traders' sins.[140] Images of idyllic villages set ablaze by ravaging slaving parties suffused activists' rhetoric. The Quaker Anthony Benezet devoted his *Historical Account of Guinea* (1771) to countering images of Africans as cruel savages—not to prove the richness of African culture but to prove its innocence.[141]

The debate over African innocence or savagery struck at points of tension in Americans' conceptions of civilization. In Scottish conjectural history and stadial theory, the progress of civilization should have increased sympathy; this assumption grounded attacks on the slave trade. Yet defenders of slavery used the same link between civilization and humanity to argue that savage, inhumane Africans needed the blessings of advanced civilization, even at the price of slavery. How, then, could critics of slavery understand the "savage" state? Slavery raised the stakes of identifying the savage state as a happy, natural state or as a cruel and inhumane one from which victims desperately needed rescuing. While the trade's advocates conflated primitive social development and inhumanity, critics stressed natural human morality and a universal moral sense. Antislavery writers drew on a more positive anthropology, growing out of moral philosophy and the increasing religious acceptance of the idea of naturally accessible human virtue.[142] Emphasizing natural morality complicated the tendency to slip between using *savage* and *barbarous* to describe primitiveness and using them to denote cruelty and inhumanity. Writers did not abandon the assumption that civilization meant increased sympathy. Yet critics of slavery also tapped into fears about the corrosive effects of commercial society, and they idealized the African as the "simple child of nature" enjoying natural pleasures.[143] In the 1790s students in Princeton's Cliosophic Society repeatedly concluded that the civilized life produced more happiness than did the savage, but they deemed it worth debating; in 1800 the savage life won over civilized life.[144]

By the late eighteenth century, the linked languages of cruelty and civilization had become loaded ones. Accusations of cruelty cut deeply, challenging one's claims to Christianity, refinement, and civilization. Critics deliberately played on Americans' (and Britons') anxieties about appearing humane, civilized, and Christian. Yet the language masked a deep ambivalence in American concern about slave suffering. The very real wrongs suffered by enslaved African Americans stood in the shadow of debates about the characters and

reputations of white Americans and their localities, as well as the anxieties of whites about their civility and refinement. The language of cruelty did not cut as neatly as its wielders hoped, perhaps nowhere as clearly as in its concrete applications.

Slaveholders' Manners and Morals

Objections to cruelty helped spark concern about slavery, but the legacy of focusing on the hearts of whites, rather than the experiences of enslaved blacks, shaped whites' paths to reform. Whatever activists hoped for the distant future, few saw slavery itself as headed for immediate extinction; some focused on attacking the slave trade; others sought gradual emancipation. For many activists in both groups, focusing on cruelty or kindness to slaves offered a way to deal with the institution until its eventual demise. Many whites united in condemning slavery's cruelty, even as their concrete goals ranged over a long continuum.[145] The flexibility of this language proved both its greatest strength and its greatest drawback.

The cruelty of the slave trade posed an attractive target for political action, and antitrade struggles united reformers across the Atlantic. For some reformers, attacking the slave trade would strike slavery at its roots and set it on a long-term path toward extinction. Criminalizing the trade would also soften the cruelties of slavery by cutting off the supply of replacements for overworked, injured slaves. And the tactic also made good strategic sense. In 1808 Thomas Clarkson explained why British activists focused on the trade in 1787: not only would abolition of the trade undermine slavery, but focusing on the trade also skirted thorny issues of property rights or the fate of freedpeople.[146] The strategy bore fruit: abolishing the trade in 1808 brought important, real benefits, despite the persistence of illegal trafficking. Yet the rhetorical focus on the original act of enslavement also blurred lines between the deeply antislavery forces and their less scrupulous counterparts. Thomas Jefferson was a slaveholder, but he still famously fumed at the British for invalidating laws banning further importation of slaves. Opposition to the trade in no way entailed opposition to the continuation of existing slavery; opposition to the trade permitted compromise with slavery itself.

Even attacks on slavery itself entailed significant compromise with slavery, because activists typically argued for gradual emancipation. Northern emancipation required decades to take full effect; statutes might free only those

born after a certain date and only when they came of age. Laws banned freeing "aged" slaves without providing for their support.[147] Gradual emancipation meant dealing with slavery for some time. Antislavery writers dealt with the prolonged time line by calling for amelioration of slave treatment. James Ramsay's widely read *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) called for softening West Indian slavery through legal regulations, such as protections for marriages. Guaranteeing "the common rights of humanity" would teach enslaved blacks "to look forward with resignation and hope" to heavenly rewards. But only eventually could they purchase freedom.[148] Some critics of slavery pinned their hopes on colonization, and they, too, located emancipation in the distant future. Until then, as Anthony Walke put it in 1793, masters should "exercise their Authority with Lenity, & to render their Slaves as happy as their Situation will admit."[149]

Fears about the social consequences of emancipation contributed to the reluctance to demand immediate abolition; proslavery rhetoricians leaped on these anxieties. In 1773 Richard Nisbet argued that emancipation would beggar rich colonists and destroy the sugar, rice, and indigo colonies; emancipation would shake the entire British Atlantic economy.[150] Blatant appeals to economic interest abounded in proslavery literature. These appeals testify to the economic importance of slavery, but they also reflect the weakening of self-denial as a model for morality. Anglo-Americans tended to assume a close match between morality and self-interest. Even antislavery authors spent more time demonstrating that emancipation would not harm the economy than they did arguing that duty should trump economic interest. The social and economic consequences of emancipation factored heavily in moral calculations.

The hesitance of antislavery efforts mirrored a wider ambivalence about slavery and the place of blacks in society, and the language of good treatment nurtured that ambivalence.[151] Concern about cruelty did not require critics to accept free blacks in their society—much less as equals—nor did it even require critics to oppose slavery. Criticisms of cruelty stretched across a long spectrum of attitudes toward slavery. Even slaveholders could be heard criticizing cruelty in the late eighteenth century. As the antislavery Baptist minister John Leland departed Virginia in 1791, he rejoiced at a new change in the "spirit of masters." Many slaveholders, he explained, now admitted "that negroes can feel injuries, hunger, pain & weariness, and I hope ye spark

of good fire will be raised to a flame in due time."[152] Leland might have hoped that sparks of compassion would light a fire of emancipation, and in the immediate postwar period many enslaved Virginians were emancipated. Robert Carter, a planter listening to Leland, did eventually free his slaves.

For many more slaveholders, however, the call for benevolence aimed not to emancipate blacks but to reform whites. Many slaveholders remained confident in the legitimacy of their power, but they also increasingly insisted on their humane exercise of that power. Humaneness ameliorated an admittedly undesirable condition. Slaves' dependency called for slaveholders' humanity, as Thomas Fairfax reminded his manager.[153] The issue, as such owners saw it, was simply one of reducing the severity of slavery. In 1796 a South Carolinian wrote to a friend in England that, despite the impressions Britons might have of West Indian slavery, local slaveholders were "generally humane and benevolent." He himself tried "to make [his slaves] as happy as their industries will admit."[154] Some slaveholders, slave traders, and defenders of slavery even began to claim the compatibility of slavery with the new humanitarian spirit.

Yet defending slavery by appealing to humanitarianism stumbled on widespread—but not universal—assumptions that slaves hated slavery. In 1778 William Lee, a Virginia slaveholder in London, told his new manager to treat his slaves "as Human Beings whom Heaven has placed under my care, not only to minister to my Luxury but to contribute to their happiness."[155] But that contribution was small; slaveholders (including Lee) more commonly admitted the necessary misery of slavery. Owners harbored few illusions about enslaved blacks' love for them. Slaveholders firmly believed in the justice and necessity of severe punishments to maintain slavery, but they recognized that enslaved people wanted freedom.[156] During the revolution few expected that slaves would stay if given the chance to escape. Despite Lee's comments in 1778, in 1775 he reported a British plot to tell slaves that the Crown would free them. Lee feared that such "wickedness" would succeed and suggested preemptive emancipation.[157] When four of Robert Carter III's slaves fled in 1792, his manager could explain that they simply wanted freedom.[158] At best, good treatment made slavery tolerable, not happy.

Humanity, moreover, remained a malleable concept in practice, especially because it never precluded severe discipline. Robert Carter III planned to emancipate his slaves, but his manager explained that their excitement over the prospect of freedom meant that they would "require some little rigour."[159]

Whites' commitment to discipline meant that *humanity* could mean many different things in practice. As Thomas Fairfax of Virginia reflected in 1788, "As to humanity toward slaves, it appears to be an indifinite [*sic*] term in this Country." "What I might call a want of humanity," he added, "others might call a necessary coercion." Such ambivalence spawned conflicts between owners and their agents about slaves' treatment and set neighborhoods abuzz with rumors.[160] The line between discipline and cruelty moved to fit the needs of slaveholders; few described their own practices as cruel. As an antislavery West Indian reported, one owner denied any cruelties in his immediate vicinity. Slaves were punished—but only rarely and without "that cruelty, *so universal in other islands*."[161] Extreme, distant cruelties aroused fierce indignation, but the situation closer to home proved more complicated.

Issues of subordination cast a long shadow on humanitarianism in practice. The specter of a free, unruly black population cooled the ardor of antislavery; fears about an insubordinate labor force tempered calls for better treatment.[162] When leaving Virginia, John Leland criticized slavery but warned enslaved blacks to behave. Slaveholders had an "undoubted" right to discipline their slaves, especially those who would not work without harsh discipline. Compassion coexisted with the idea that slaves compounded their misery by misbehavior. Leland's sympathies lay not with the pain of enslaved sufferers but with the emotional pain of slaveholders compelled to resort to severity. He explained to enslaved blacks, "You cannot conceive w[ha]t pain, w[ha]t distress of soul y[ou]r masters endure. . . . on account of y[ou]r indolence & roguery."[163] Leland's willingness to treat slaveholders as victims of their own severity points to a deep ambivalence in early discussions of slavery: black pain mattered first as a white moral concern.

Anxiety about the unmanageability of enslaved labor further complicated antislavery concerns about cruelty. If enslaved blacks were the victims of slavery, so too were slaveholders, who were also trapped in a violent system. In an 1802 speech advocating abolition, George Ritter insisted that whites were "in some measure slaves to our own negroes, most wretchedly chained." But the cruelty that Ritter worried most about was a violent slave uprising.[164] Antislavery writers exploited fears that slavery led to inevitable insurrection and argued, as Benjamin Rush did, that a "natural Love of Liberty . . . can only be overcome by severe Laws and Punishments." The dehumanization of slavery—as slaveholders and their critics recognized—depended on violence; the "rigours" of slavery, St. George Tucker contended, resulted not from the

"sanguinary tempers" of slaveholders but from slavery itself.[165] If enslaved blacks desired liberty, maintaining slavery thus necessarily depended on some violence. Yet while slavery's critics challenged slavery by pointing to that dependence on violence, slaveholders also diluted their moral responsibility for slave suffering by painting themselves as helpless victims of forces beyond their control, almost forced into severity.

Despite the antislavery hope that moral concern about cruelty would galvanize antislavery, tensions in Americans' understanding of cruelty and humanity limited the ability of humanitarianism to translate directly into an emancipationist program. Critics focused on white manners and morals rather than black suffering; ambivalence about the place of blacks in society only further muddied the waters. Critics turned to reforming slaveholders' behavior to palliate the evil of slavery in the short run, but kinder treatment could also justify slavery's continuance in the long run. Addressing white manners and morals opened opportunities for Americans to come to terms with slavery, perhaps indefinitely. Focusing on the manners and morals of white participants did not, in the end, cut to the heart of slavery.

By the end of the eighteenth century, humanitarianism seemed poised to sweep through American culture. Religion and moral philosophy conspired to define cruelty as a rejection of God's benevolent will and as a sign of fundamental moral breakdown. Cruelty countered Americans' vision of civilization and refinement on an individual and social level; cruelty shook the foundations of morality. As moralists conflated benevolence and virtue, they expected virtue to spread happiness. Americans, caught up in a tide of humanitarian feeling, expected that suffering, whether real or imagined, would melt the hearts of all good people. Soft hearts, in turn, would turn against the cruelties that so obviously existed around them. As the century closed, observers might well conclude that the surge of humanitarian thinking would sweep slavery away in its path.

Yet the surging enthusiasm for humanitarianism obscured complexities in Americans' attitudes toward cruelty. Eighteenth-century humanitarianism proved to be as much a mood as a concrete set of demands. The call for sympathy shone clearly in eighteenth-century America, but the practicalities of humanitarian reform remained nebulous and uncertain. Concern about cruelty did not translate neatly into ideological opposition to slavery or concern about African Americans' human rights, dignity, or equality; human-

itarianism did not even require deep concern about the pain suffered by enslaved blacks. The philosophical underpinnings of humanitarianism took shape in debates about human nature, the nature of God, and the nature of moral action, rather than in discussions about the nature of pain or suffering. Pain occupied an ambivalent place in eighteenth-century humanitarianism. Humaneness grew indirectly out of concern about the failures of benevolence, and it turned not on the right to be free from pain but on the wrongness of inflicting pain on others. White Americans cared about cruelty because of what it meant for themselves; they cared about the malevolence of the cruel much more than the injuries done to victims. The experiences of victims tested the morality of actors and spectators, but suffering mattered much less in itself. Yet the very emphasis on cruelty shone light—however refracted—onto the torments of victims.

The lineage of humanitarianism complicated its practices. Moral-philosophical assumptions that pleasure flowed out of virtue could not have contrasted more starkly with the Quakers' insistence on the value of suffering, self-denial, and detachment from worldly pleasures. The growth of humanitarianism and benevolence drew from these two parallel, but fundamentally different, streams of thinking about pain and pleasure. The tensions between these two competing impulses created a long legacy that shaped and complicated humanitarianism. Even in its earliest days humanitarianism was not a simple, unmediated reaction to the experience of suffering. Even as Americans agreed that cruelty was wrong, their definitions of cruelty depended on competing assumptions about what constituted necessary pain, about the usefulness of pain and suffering, and about how to draw lines of moral responsibility for pain. The idea of humanity was never as simple as it seemed; applying it proved difficult from the start.

CHAPTER THREE

Moral Responsibility and Removal, 1800–1832

Humanitarian sentiment thrived in the early nineteenth century. Moral objections to cruelty abounded in American public culture, and activists drew on this concern to challenge the morality of the slave trade. They did not convince everyone, but the willingness of many slaveholders to denounce the cruelty of the trade weakened any chance of defending the trade as humane. Few Americans claimed the trade's humaneness, and far more condemned its *self-evident* cruelty. Yet the meaning of humanitarianism remained more fluid than appearances suggested. If humaneness condemned the slave trade, it was far less clear what humanitarianism demanded for slavery itself—other than a vague squeamishness about some of its practices.

The fluidity of humanitarianism mattered as Americans began to grapple with the issue of slavery itself. Critics of cruelty hailed the 1808 abolition of the American slave trade as a great victory for humaneness. Not only did the ban end the trade's own cruelty, but abolition also promised to mitigate slavery: cutting off a replacement supply of laborers would force owners to treat slaves more humanely. Activists even predicted that the dwindling

supply of enslaved laborers would set slavery on the path to extinction. That jubilant confidence quickly wore thin. Not only did some states continue to import large numbers of captive Africans up to 1808; slavery showed clear signs of expansion. Every decade, the census revealed that the enslaved population—like the white population—was growing exponentially; while the numbers of slaves multiplied, the expansion of cotton culture in the Old Southwest stretched the geographic range of slavery. Whatever fantasies white Americans harbored about the gradual, effortless extinction of slavery, demographic realities impinged on their dreams. If slavery were to end, it would take human action.

What, precisely, ought to be done was less clear. Humanitarianism stretched into a long continuum of alternatives to the status quo, ranging from amelioration to colonization to outright emancipation. By defining humaneness as capaciously as possible, this flexibility and fluidity gave humanitarian sentiment political strength. Americans had a breathtaking range of ways to establish their humanitarian credentials; slaveholders and their fiercest critics united in contending that *something* ought to diminish slavery's cruelty, even if they agreed on nothing more. Whether the problem was that slavery existed or that it was too cruel was another story. People agreed on the latter, and that usually sufficed to claim humaneness.

Early humanitarianism thrived amid white ambivalence about slavery. Although Americans later divided into the neater categories of proslavery or antislavery, early humanitarianism lacked such sharp lines. It gathered a coalition of disparate people holding positions that later seemed contradictory.[1] In this ecumenism the colonization movement nurtured competing attitudes toward slavery. Colonization condemned the cruelty of slavery but also questioned the humaneness of immediate emancipation. Colonization demanded neither altruism nor ideological purity from supporters; the movement fed on pity for black victims, even as it drew on fears about the moral and physical dangers of white cruelty and black poverty, vice, and suffering.[2] White Americans paid little attention to the tensions silently building in their rhetoric; a humanitarian consensus worked precisely by avoiding divisive questions. In the long term the tensions multiplied, but the meanings of humanitarianism stretched even further.

Distant Cruelty and Local Slavery

By the late eighteenth century, decades of moral concern about cruelty coalesced to energize movements to ban the slave trade. For a brief period humanitarianism seemed to lead in a clear direction. Few of the trade's defenders claimed the mantle of humaneness, and even fewer Americans granted it to them. In the thrill of antitrade unity, humanitarians paid much less attention to what Americans thought about slavery itself, as long as they claimed a vague discomfort with its practices of cruelty. The center of humanitarian moral outrage lay in comfortably distant cruelties, not local slavery. Activists directed their attention to the far-off trade and the West Indian sugar plantations that relied on constant supplies of fresh victims. Slavery's critics did not excuse the cruelties of local slavery, but these objections paled next to the wellspring of outrage directed at the villainies of the slave trade itself. In coming decades the shifting of the debate away from the trade to American slavery would force activists to rethink their rhetorical strategies. But as long as the trade commanded the rhetorical center of the issue, white Americans could gaze into the distance, pushing aside thorny questions about their moral responsibility for perpetuating local slavery.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the prospects of humanitarian legislation against the slave trade had brightened considerably, which encouraged activists to intensify their rhetoric and accumulate more evidence of cruelty. As British activists pushed for parliamentary legislation against the slave trade, their American counterparts hoped for a congressional ban in 1808 once the constitutional moratorium on such action expired. For decades writers had stressed the trade and distant slavery; the prospect of abolition only strengthened that impulse. Legislative activism gave activists compelling reasons to collect details of cruelty; in turn, this provided a trove of gruesome details for use in pamphlets. The parliamentary debates of 1791 and 1792 provided additional fodder.[3] Not all the facts were new; writers recited the details of the infamous Zong incident, in which a slave trader drowned hundreds of captives for insurance money.[4] Yet activists now sedulously accumulated evidence of cruelty to flesh out critiques of slavery. Gruesome details—new or old—took on new importance in the drive for banning the trade. With such high stakes, activists could not "rest on its impolicy and inhumanity being self evident"; they sought proof.[5] If distances yawned between readers and the slaves described in pamphlets, writers made up for

distance with graphic detail. How could anyone doubt the cruelty of the trade, when even sharks knew to follow the bloody trail of slave ships?[6]

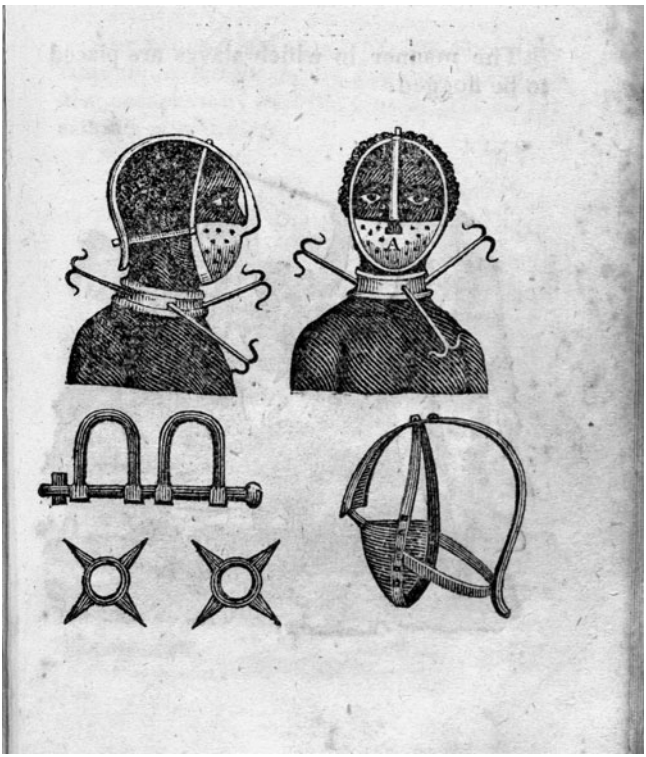
The growing reliance on *details* of cruelty slowly helped transform the moral meaning of cruelty. The humanitarianism inherited from the eighteenth century emphasized slaveholders' cruelty and observers' reactions rather than a victim's experience of pain. The emphasis on white guilt and spectatorship persisted, but with every decade, antislavery imagery grew more explicit, detailed, and gruesome. Antitrade rhetoric depended on visible and sensory signs of cruelty, especially physical cruelty. Indeed, even when polemicists described the emotional torments of captives and slaves, they portrayed interior, emotional suffering through the language of visible, external cruelties. Authors and artists positioned their audiences as observers who saw "scenes of bitter grief" and heard "the shrieks of the women; the cries of the children; the shouts of the warriors; and the groans of the dying."[7]

As abstract denunciations of cruelty congealed into bloody details, activists drew pain into the center of their depictions of cruelty. Thomas Branagan, a prolific antislavery convert, exemplified this turn to more concrete, graphic depictions of slavery's cruelty in his *Penitential Tyrant* (1807) and *Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa* (1804). Branagan, a former overseer and slave trader, built his argument on cruelty. The Philadelphian admonished West Indian planters to "view thy hungry, naked, bleeding, groaning, expiring slaves; all raw with fresh wounds; wounds filled with pepper and salt to encrease [*sic*] their agony, already greater than humanity can bear!"[8] Slaveholders dripped hot lead or wax on slaves' skin or hurled them into boiling cane juice; men whipped women who refused their sexual demands; and a manager whipped a slave "till his back was almost turned to a jelly."[9] Like his predecessors, Branagan cared more about showing whites' inhumanity and the absurdity of a "cruel Christian" than understanding enslaved laborers' experiences.[10] Even the title of *Penitential Tyrant* stressed white morality. Still, Branagan relied on graphic imagery, cramming his pages with suffering, bleeding, and groaning.[11] The bloody details of cruelty stood at the center of his attack on slavery. Cruelty was not simply a manifestation of disordered passions, malevolence, or illicit obsession with the flesh. Nor was cruelty merely a slippery slope to worse evils, as in Hogarth's depiction of Tom Nero's slide from cruelty to murder. Cruelty, in all its bloody, painful, physical detail, commanded horror on its own.[12]

The push for abolishing the trade spurred the growth of antislavery imag-

ery. Slavery's critics drew on a growing stock of engravings depicting the abuse of slaves in increasingly graphic detail. In 1789 an engraver created a schematic drawing of a ship with hundreds of captives crammed into impossibly tight spaces; within a few years the graphic detail multiplied. Americans saw lurid depictions of cruelty in William Blake's skillful engravings for Captain John Gabriel Stedman's 1796 narrative of his expedition in the distant Dutch colony of Surinam. Blake's images (hand-colored in the fanciest edition) included an engraving of a naked enslaved woman hanging by her hands from a tree, her flesh torn and dripping bright-red blood.[13] Stedman's text explained that she was "lacerated in such a shocking manner" that "she was from her neck to her ancles [*sic*] literally dyed over with blood."[14] Two other engravings depicted executions: one of a man being broken on a rack and another of a man hanging (alive) from a gallows, suspended by an iron hook stabbed through his ribs.[15] Gruesome detail similarly proliferated in American engravings. In 1805 Alexander Anderson engraved a broadside illustrating implements of torture, including shackles, yokes, and an iron mask and gag; the gag, he added, pulled off the victim's skin. Slaveholders wielded whips and branding irons. Pamphleteers quickly reprinted the engravings in other works.[16] Not all images dripped blood; the traditional and less bloody figure of the chained, half-naked slave kneeling and imploring, "Am I not a man and a brother?" remained an antislavery staple. Yet many polemicists now aimed more directly at the stomach; images too gruesome for decorating dinner plates proliferated in pamphlets.

The abolition of the trade in 1808 forced activists to reshape their rhetoric and strategies; they inherited a wealth of concrete, gruesome details but no consensus on what to do with them. The banning of the American slave trade shifted the ground beneath activists' feet. Political agitation yielded to celebrations and orations commemorating the trade's abolition. The delight of humanitarian victory, however, obscured the difficulty of the task ahead—and the lack of clarity about what, precisely, that task was. The humanitarian consensus denouncing the slave trade broke apart as attention shifted to slavery. What *did* humanitarianism mean for slavery itself? Humanitarianism included both ardent critics of slavery and slaveholders like Patrick Henry, who voiced his humane queasiness about slavery without emancipating anyone.[17] Humaneness demanded squeamishness about the widely acknowledged "excesses" of slavery, perhaps even a hope that slavery would eventually disappear. But squeamishness did not necessarily flow into political



In their push to abolish the slave trade, early nineteenth-century activists relied on increasingly graphic depictions of cruelty, such as Alexander Anderson's engraving of torture devices printed in an 1805 broadside. See *Injured Humanity: Being a Representation of What the Unhappy Children of Africa Endure from Those Who Call Themselves Christians* ([New York]: Printed and sold by Samuel Wood, [1805]); repr. in Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant; or, Slave Trader Reformed* (1807). Courtesy of Brown University Library.

action. The victory against the slave trade left—and reinforced—nagging questions about the perpetuation of slavery.

The long-standing rhetorical focus on the trade also posed challenges for critics of slavery. Between the slave trade and slavery yawned a huge rhetorical gap; antitrade rhetoric did not translate neatly into a political agenda for slavery. Nineteenth-century Americans inherited a humanitarianism that worked most powerfully against distant cruelty, whether aboard slave ships

or on West Indian sugar plantations. For decades this distant focus made good strategic sense; it defined humanitarianism as capaciously as possible and dodged sticky questions about whether moral people could own slaves. The fiery denunciations that activists hurled hit a limited number of people, barely singeing most slaveholders. In contrast, tackling slavery threw the moral characters of countless Americans into the fray.

Activists had made their antitrade rhetoric palatable to as many people as possible by limiting their aims; they drew sharp distinctions between the cruelty used in enslaving Africans and the tolerable continuance of an inherited slavery. Thomas Jefferson lambasted Britain for perpetuating the slave trade, which had provided him and other slaveholders with so much human property. Whether out of moral conviction or political prudence, even whites disposed to see slavery as an evil often distinguished active participation in the evil slave trade from the necessary but temporary toleration of an evil situation. In 1797 John Coakley Lettsom, a British Quaker, joined efforts against the slave trade but still warned William Thornton, a young American immigrant from Tortola, against freeing his slaves. Lettsom tried to soothe Thornton's conscience by reminding him, "Thou didst not make them slaves, and has not that circumstance to answer for."[18] Antitrade rhetoric thus posed rhetorical difficulties for slavery's critics. In the wake of victory, they needed now to convince people that indefinitely tolerating slavery was evil.

Opponents of slavery nibbled away at its tolerance by stressing the moral and physical danger that tolerating cruelty posed to white Americans. Focusing on the well-being of all whites, not just slaveholders, served useful purposes: instead of denouncing owners as uniquely and individually guilty, activists treated slavery as a national problem. The true guilt for slavery lay in the past, in the slave trade; the trade entangled whites in a problem without an easy escape. And all Americans shared the dangers caused by cruelty. Slaveholders bore the greatest responsibility (and danger), but no American could shrug off the duty to seek a humane solution. What, precisely, that solution was remained hazy, but that was not the point. Americans could agree that there was a problem without agreeing on how to define the problem, much less the solution. For the moment, seeking a solution sufficed.

"Flying from the Scene of Its Oppression": Moral Dangers of Toleration

By 1808 critics of slavery drew on myriad humanitarian ideas to attack slavery's cruelty. Whether activists hearkened back to colonial Quakers or eighteenth-century moral philosophy, they inherited a tendency to view cruelty to slaves—and whites' reactions to that cruelty—as an indicator of whites' moral standing. Cruelty harmed not only those who perpetrated it but also anyone who observed it. The point was not simply that a humane person should condemn perpetrators and pity victims but also that cruelty poisoned an entire culture. Observing the cruelties of slavery pulled free Americans into the moral dangers of participating in cruelty. The challenge of slavery's cruel presence—embodied in the pain and scars of African Americans—posed moral and practical problems for whites. The idea was not new, but as humanitarianism shifted attention from distant cruelties to local slavery, the issue of tolerating cruelty in one's physical presence gained new urgency.

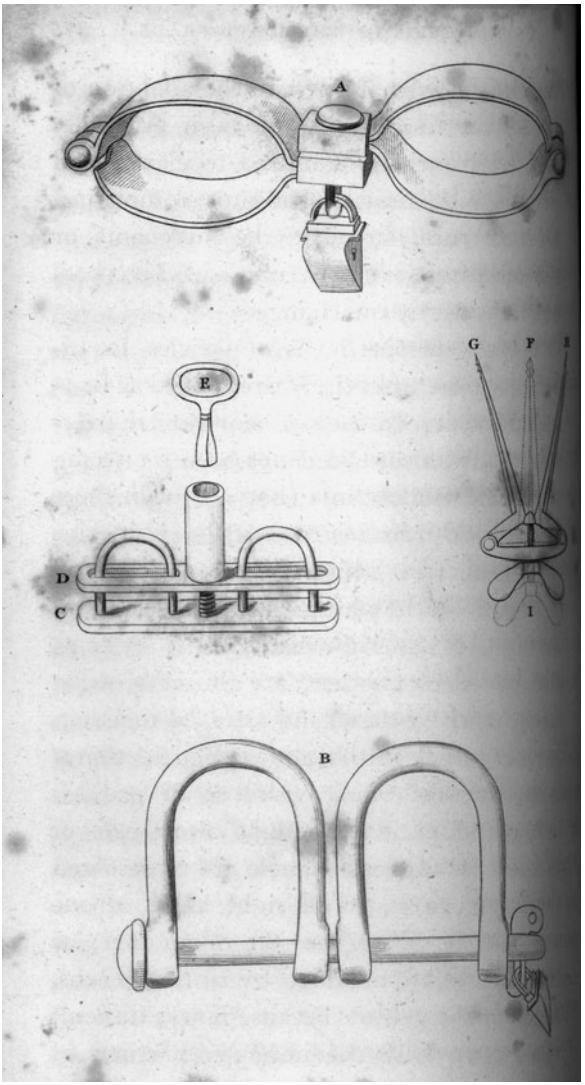
Strategically, the rhetoric of moral contamination served useful purposes; although it did not spread the blame for slavery evenly, it made one person's cruelty everyone's business. The physical presence of suffering slaves morally contaminated a society that wished to see itself as civilized and humane. Slavery could not simply be an individual choice if it poisoned the moral health of the nation; tolerating cruelty posed serious moral risks to everyone around. White activists' fixation on moral contamination challenged slavery. Yet this fixation also shaped their priorities, tempting them to find solutions that aimed most directly at removing their guilt rather than restoring the rights of injured victims.

The strategy of stressing the moral dangers of cruelty grew out of arguments against the trade. The gruesome imagery of the first decade of the century measured spectators' morality through their responses to the sight of cruelty. Yet activists also increasingly hinted that passive spectators bore responsibility for cruelty; polemicists used spectatorship to widen moral responsibility for slavery. In 1808 Thomas Clarkson's celebratory history of the abolition of the British slave trade included engravings of slave-trading tools: manacles, a thumbscrew, and a *speculum oris*, a device for forcing open the mouths of captives who refused food. He had found the devices in a shop window in Liverpool in 1787. Their placement in plain view (indeed, on

display) suggested not only that traders commonly used such devices of torture but also that the British public accepted torture; the public saw such devices but did not condemn them.[19] Leaving little to the imagination, Clarkson described in detail how such devices were used: "The thumbs are put into this instrument through the two circular holes at the top of it. By turning a key, a bar rises up by means of a screw from C to D, and the pressure upon them becomes painful. By turning it further you may make the blood start from the ends of them. By taking the key away, as at E, you leave the tortured person in agony."[20]

The arrangement of the items as a museum display or mechanical diagram—complete with labels for detailing their mechanisms—lent authority to Clarkson's claims. But the dispassionate display jarred against the visceral disgust that torture devices should have elicited in an audience. Unlike many antislavery images, the mechanistic diagrams lacked visible actors. Subtly, however, Clarkson positioned his readers and spectators as actors. Clarkson's use of *you* in "*you* may make the blood start from the ends of them" and "*you* leave the tortured person in agony" blurred the moral lines between observing and perpetrating cruelty, reproaching the spectator who silently tolerated such brutality. Despite the mechanistic depiction of the devices, anyone who could dispassionately view the engraving as a mechanical diagram shared in the moral responsibility for that cruelty. The idea that people bore responsibility for the cruelties they passively observed—even without perpetrating the cruelties—helped create a more expansive language of moral responsibility.

The lines separating spectatorship, toleration, and participation in cruelty could be razor thin. Thomas Branagan's *Penitential Tyrant* (1807) positioned Branagan as a spectator of cruelty to enslaved people: "Their wrongs I saw and heard, their mighty woes / I now relate."[21] At first glance Branagan's observational stance seems utterly conventional. But he had been no mere spectator; he had worked on a slave ship and then as an overseer in Antigua.[22] Despite calling himself a "penitential tyrant," Branagan placed the burden of his guilt on his observation, on the "cruel and shocking barbarities I have seen them endure." With a few exceptions he glided silently over his personal cruelty, using his status as a slave trader or overseer to lend credibility to his claims as spectator.[23] Even a rare description of his own cruelty slipped seamlessly between his observation and cruelty, placing the weight of guilt on observation:



Thomas Clarkson reproduced this engraving of slave-trading devices found on display in a shop window in Liverpool. The public display of torture devices suggested that the moral responsibility for cruelty was not limited to the individuals who tormented victims. Instead, everyone bore responsibility for the cruelties that they tolerated. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (1808). Reproduced from an original held by the Department of Special Collections of the University Libraries of Notre Dame.

For I myself have oft stood by unmov'd
Dead to entreaty I have often prov'd
Dead to remorse, I often have stood by,
And still as often did the lash apply![24]

Branagan best exemplified this rhetorical strategy, but it was a common one. Activists routinely denounced the slave trader or slaveholder who "regards not the voice of the sufferers"; callous observation and cruelty merged.[25] Observers' apathy grew from the same roots as slaveholders' cruelty: the failure to heed victims' anguish. Slaveholders could act cruelly because they could first watch calmly as victims writhed in agony.

Observing cruelty even created a slippery slope of immorality; frequent contact with slavery's cruelty undermined the sensibilities and morality of casual observers. What began as "disgust and horror" at cruelty turned slowly into "entire indifference"; the screams of slaves evoked no sympathy.[26] A British observer mused that overexposure to cruelty desensitized observers, thus explaining "why so much cruelty has been tolerated in the world."[27] Tolerating cruelty even blurred the line between nonslaveholders and slaveholders. Observers might morph into slaveholders who could "calmly indulge" in cruelty that would once "have made them shudder."[28] Among slaveholders, habituation to cruelty further eroded morality. Echoing Thomas Jefferson, activists warned that slavery schooled children in cruelty; only a "prodigy" could "retain his manners and morals undepraved."[29] Tolerating cruelty created a spiral of immorality.

Slavery's cruelty even came to seem a geographically defined evil, implicating the entire society that tolerated it. In 1825, when Philadelphia Quakers sent a survey to Southerners, Friends asked whether slave traders had "the confidence of the white inhabitants" and could get loans. If traders could easily get credit, Southerners must view them as respectable. Credit worthiness reflected not only economic status but also traders' moral acceptance in a community. Likewise, the survey asked whether slave coffles "travel by day or night." Did the southern public tolerate the sight of slavery and its cruelty, or did traders have to cloak their deeds in darkness?[30] Tolerating slavery and its cruelty implicated an entire geographic community.

Geography likewise implicated a growing range of people because local laws against manumissions took away the moral autonomy of individuals. Since North Carolina banned owners from emancipating enslaved blacks

without removing them from the state, faithful Quakers could not follow their consciences without emigrating. Quakers resorted to obeying the letter, but not the spirit, of the law. In 1808 they created a committee that formally owned several hundred slaves whom individual Friends wished to manumit; by holding the legal titles, the committee prevented backsliding Quakers or unscrupulous heirs from reclaiming them.[31] Quaker agents hired out the nominally enslaved people, educated them, and disposed of their wages, ostensibly for their own good.[32] But "humane and truly conscientious" Quakers who wished to free African Americans permanently found the arrangement unsatisfactory.[33] Quakers' mere location in a slave society prevented them from following their consciences. They could only remove themselves or their human property from the state; they attempted both.

The geographic construction of cruelty only strengthened as countless critics of slavery departed from the South and trekked to the Northwest Territory, seemingly far from the sights and sounds of cruelty. Whether simple revulsion at cruelty or fears of moral damage motivated migrants, they distanced themselves from cruelty. In 1819 Edward Coles, a native of Albemarle County, Virginia, moved to Illinois to free his slaves and escape the taint of his slaveholding home. Feeling repugnance at the sight of slavery, Coles dreamed of becoming "the champion of humanity!" But he felt helpless in Virginia and concluded that he could only save his conscience by emigrating. Since Coles could only "feel its sufferings, without the capacity of relieving it, all that I can do is to preserve my principles, & save my feelings, by flying from the scene of its oppression."[34] Numerous others explained their migration as an escape from the sights and sounds of cruelty. John O'Neale, a South Carolina Quaker, moved to Indiana in 1819. He left, as his son explained decades later, to avoid raising children amid the "the crack of the overseer[']s whip" and the cries of slaves. Even Quakers' worship fell under the shadow of slavery; within a mile of O'Neale's meetinghouse a slaveholder threw a woman onto hot coals until her skin was "burnt into a crisp."[35] O'Neale joined a wider surge of North and South Carolinian Friends departing for the Old Northwest, particularly Indiana, distant from cruelty.

The tendency to define the problem of cruelty in geographic terms exacerbated struggles over the future of slavery in the new western territories. For some white migrants like Coles, migration to the Old Northwest meant the chance to free their enslaved laborers, but for others migration provided a way to escape slavery without dealing with the messy realities of emancipa-

tion. They did not need to end slavery—just flee its presence. Certainly, whites had other reasons for moving west. New territories, unlike the older states, seemed to offer blank slates for morality, allowing people to escape their sins without needing to fully overcome them. No need for gradualism should stand in the way of soil free from slavery.

Even as some literally fled from the presence of cruelty, other writers distanced it rhetorically. Northwestward migration reinforced the notion that slavery and its cruelty were uniquely southern, despite the persistence of northern slavery. Edward Coles fled to Illinois, but he soon learned the open secret that slavery existed there in defiance of the Northwest Ordinance. When Coles became governor, he got his wish to be a "champion of humanity" by leading efforts to keep slavery out of the state.[36] While the expansion of slavery into the Old Southwest sparked relatively little public outrage, the threat of slavery's northward expansion fueled a political crisis in 1819. Migrants who fled to the Old Northwest to distance themselves from slavery furiously denounced the acceptance of slavery in Missouri, in part because the northward expansion of slavery brought its cruelty threateningly close.[37] Legal slavery persisted elsewhere in the North; gradual emancipation took decades to take full effect, especially in the mid-Atlantic states. Gradual emancipation strengthened the regional construction of cruelty, but this regionalism built on older precedents. Northerners had fixated on southern and West Indian cruelty even in the eighteenth century, when northern slavery still flourished.[38]

The tendency to view cruelty as peculiarly southern helped create and strengthen sectional consciousness. A Philadelphian in South Carolina lamented to her family that she detested living in a land of luxury "acquired by the hearts blood" of enslaved blacks.[39] More self-consciously, the Connecticut minister Samuel May reminded his congregation that they shared guilt for slavery. Such admissions were necessary because most New Englanders had never seen slavery: "The sight and sound of their [slaves'] sufferings are lost in the distance."[40]

Fixating on distant cruelty did not absolve Northerners of guilt, but it did transform the nature of their guilt. Northerners accepted national blame for slavery but narrowed the meaning of that blame. First, rather than stressing northern slavery or Northerners' economic ties to southern cotton culture, Northerners bore the guilt for tolerating *southern* cruelty. Second, insofar as Northerners shared guilt for slavery, the guilt lay in the past, in the now-

illegal slave trade; and the trade implicated them in *southern* slavery. If Northerners accepted part of the blame, it was a small—and shrinking—part. They defined cruelty as uniquely southern, hemmed in by lines of latitude, especially after the Missouri Compromise. Northern activists saw slavery as a national problem, but this was because the Constitution gave *southern* slavery national standing. The Constitution tolerated the slave trade until 1808 and the existence of slavery indefinitely; the fugitive slave clause demanded that Northerners return runaways.[41] Nathaniel Prime, a Vermont native, described the American union as "*purchased at the price of the blood and groans of Africa*" by constitutionally sanctioning twenty years of the slave trade.[42] As Northerners enacted gradual emancipation statutes, activists described the nation's sin as one of toleration.

If the language of toleration displaced blame, the logic of blame also implied that action was needed. As Americans shifted their attention from the distant cruelties of the slave trade or West Indian slavery to local slavery, they often softened their rhetoric about cruelty, displacing much of the responsibility onto spectatorship and toleration. Yet the logic of moral contamination did imply that *something* should be done, not simply about the trade but about slavery itself. But what that something was remained unclear. In the meantime, critics of slavery devised solutions that aimed most directly at washing away their own guilt and only secondarily addressing the rights of victims.

"Blood Which Cries to Heaven for Vengeance"

If slavery's cruelty posed grave moral dangers to the souls of white Americans, it posed an equally menacing threat to their bodies. Activists hoped that even if white Americans would not redress the wrongs of slavery out of concern for enslaved blacks' sufferings, perhaps whites would do so to protect themselves. Critics of slavery—black and white alike—deliberately played on white fears of revolts. Slavery created a vicious cycle: because enslaved blacks sought their freedom, only cruelty would keep them in check. But cruelty sparked a desire for revenge. In states where slaves made up a significant proportion of the population, the threat of insurrection loomed large. Furthermore, cruelty risked God's vengeance. Thomas Jefferson was not alone when he nervously suggested that the benevolent, humane God would side with blacks in a conflict.[43] Although slaveholders bore the worst risks, all

whites shared the danger. Rebelling slaves might attack all whites; when God directed wrath at nations, all individuals suffered.

Such fears gave slavery's critics ample fodder to challenge the toleration of cruelty. The frontispiece of Thomas Branagan's *Preliminary Essay* featured James Poupard's engraving of a slave trader wearing a suit and top hat (showing the trader's ostensibly civilized status) and whipping an embracing couple to separate them. This half of the image, depicting physical and emotional cruelty, mimicked an engraving by Archibald Alexander in *Injured Humanity* (1805).[44] But the top half of the image was unique, and it reflected the tone of Branagan's book. This portion featured a set of gazing angels and a large eye in a triangle (a symbol of God's all-seeing eye) with radiating beams. Lest anyone miss the point, "And lo! he darts his piercing eye profound, / And looks majestically stern around!" topped the engraving.[45] The engraving juxtaposed God's sympathetic vision with the unfeeling gaze of the human observers depicted in the engraving—and, implicitly, those passively looking at the engraving. Human spectatorship failed in its moral duty; human insensibility brought divine judgment. The blood of slaves, Branagan reflected, "cries to heaven for vengeance."[46] Branagan interrupted his accounts of cruelty to detail the falls of Jerusalem and Babylon. America, he implied, would be next.[47] The blood spilled by slaveholders' whips polluted the entire nation, and God's wrath would strike the nation that tolerated such cruelty.[48] God, polemicists warned, felt slaves' "stripes and wounds" and would avenge such cruelties.[49] Persisting in slavery, as Philadelphia Quakers put it, risked "the most alarming consequences to our country."[50]

Most concretely, activists warned that God would punish whites through the hands of rebelling blacks. Fears of insurrection or racial war plagued white Americans, especially after revolution in Haiti convinced them of a rebellion's devastating potential. The Haitian Revolution also reminded whites that if rebelling slaves seized control, nonslaveholders would also endure their wrath. In 1787 reflections on God's justice made Jefferson "tremble" at the prospect of "an exchange of situations." Emancipation *would* come, whether with slaveholders' "consent" or their "extirpation."[51] Jefferson's fears quieted little in ensuing decades. His library contained four of Branagan's works, with their dire warnings of impending judgment.[52] In 1802 Jefferson nervously reported that the news of the Haitian Revolution had created "a great disposition to insurgency" among American slaves.[53] In 1814 Jefferson fretted again that slavery must end through white action "or by the bloody process of St. Do-

mingo [Haiti]."[54] The unsuccessful plot led by Gabriel Prosser in Henrico County, Virginia, in 1800, reports of Denmark Vesey's conspiracy of 1822, and Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831 brought the danger alarmingly close; numerous accounts of smaller insurrections and murders underscored the danger.[55] Rachel Blanding, a displaced Northerner in Camden, South Carolina, reported that slaves had plotted to burn the town, seize an arsenal, murder the men, and spare the women "for their own purposes." Despite her fear she understood their "thirst for revenge"; three weeks later, she wrote that several "died like hereos [*sic*]."[56]

Fears of divine or human vengeance for slavery took root in white Americans' understanding of cruelty. Cruelty made a "thirst for revenge" understandable, even predictable; cruelty led directly to insurrections. An 1802 pamphlet explained that a recent plot "was an organization that cruelty produced." Under enough cruelty "submission becomes impossible."[57] The connection between cruelty and revenge was hardly new in 1802, but the specter of Haiti exacerbated white fears that rebellions could succeed. Twenty-seven years later, Henry Clay played on the same fears, warning Kentuckians that the cruelty of slavery's origins and nature made "frequent insurrections" inevitable.[58] Whites, activists warned, should expect *earthly* punishment for cruelty. This conviction took root not only in religion but also in moral philosophy. Moralists stressed that nature forged a link between virtue and happiness, on the one hand, and vice and pain, on the other. In the laws of this moral Newtonianism, cruelty inflicted on enslaved laborers would rebound onto cruel slaveholders. The British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson noted, "Action and reaction are equal to each other, as well in the moral as in the natural world."[59] Virtue naturally brought rewards, and vice naturally spawned misery—not simply as punishment but through the natural workings of cause and effect. Cruelty *naturally* sparked a desire for revenge and wreaked havoc.

Whites did not need to object to slavery on deeply principled grounds to worry about slavery, and humanitarianism thrived on diverse motives. Activists deliberately appealed to self-referential concerns about the links between cruelty and slave unrest; cruelty spawned race war. For Thomas Branagan cruelty and white danger were closely connected. Human nature remembered injuries, and American blacks had experienced only injury. "It is impossible in the nature of things," Branagan argued, for free blacks "to be reconciled to the whites; while hundreds of thousands of their countrymen

are groaning, bleeding, and dying." Blacks only waited for a chance to revenge these "barbarities."[60]

"Let Us Wash Our Hands, and Shake Their Blood from Our Garments"

As polemicists stressed the moral and physical dangers of cruelty, white critics of slavery fantasized that removing black sufferers from whites' presence would protect whites. Cruelty destroyed the moral character of slaveholders, slave traders, and even observers. This concern was fundamentally self-referential: black victims, alienated by cruelty, endangered white America. Critics worried about cruelty, but they identified suffering blacks themselves as the core problem.[61] Racism played a crucial role in whites' desire for an America without black Americans, but blacks' status as victims gave a narrative structure and logic to prejudice. African Americans were identified as a problem precisely because they suffered at the hands of whites; irremovable cruelty defined the relationship between the two races, as long as they attempted to coexist. Defining black Americans as perpetual victims allowed whites to justify a desire for a white America as a prudential concern for the safety and happiness of *both* groups rather than mere selfish prejudice.

Defining the sufferer as the core problem constituted a subtle shift in discussions of cruelty. Eighteenth-century white writers had highlighted the danger of cruelty to white souls, and they viewed scarred black bodies as signs of white guilt. But by the early nineteenth century, black bodies not only signified white immorality; they also embodied an ongoing moral contagion. White Americans self-servingly described slavery as forced upon them; they could not escape slavery without also removing the bodily presence of blacks. Slave pain did not simply mirror the rottenness of slaveholders' souls. Instead, blacks *caused* that rottenness, forcing whites into cruelty. If whites were originally to blame in creating slavery, the continued presence of blacks forced whites to risk their own bodies and souls.

The association of white immorality and black victimhood encouraged colonizationists to identify the black population itself as a moral problem.[62] Mathew Carey and other colonizationists reprinted population statistics, noting that from 1790 to 1830 the white population increased only 80 percent, but the enslaved population grew 112 percent. Colonizationists pro-

jected that by 1880 the black population (at 2,330,039 in 1830) would swell to 10,447,968 if its alarming growth rate of 35 percent (from 1820 to 1830) was not arrested.[63] In part, such rapid population growth—and the westward expansion of slavery—crushed hopes that slavery would disappear on its own. But the obsession with population statistics also revealed a deep discomfort with the physical presence of black victims, whether slave or free.

The fixation on population statistics likewise exposed the tendency of activists to conflate the presence of victims with the existence of moral evil. Thomas Branagan described slavery as a southern tree extending its branches to the North, dropping its "poisonous fruit" of free blacks on the North and contaminating a free land.[64] Similarly, he bemoaned "this accumulating gangrene, which is devouring the vitals of the body politic."[65] Branagan was ardently antislavery, but the "accumulating gangrene" was the North's growing free black population, not the gangrene of slavery. Free blacks poisoned and contaminated the North. Branagan's tree metaphor also elided slavery and its victims. If whites could not chop down the tree of slavery, they should "lopp [*sic*] off the branches that drop their untimely fruit in our states, and transport them" to Africa. There, the branches would grow into a flourishing tree.[66] Branagan's sloppy metaphor was suggestive. Initially, the tree was slavery, and free blacks were its poisoned fruit. Moments later, the branches represented blacks themselves. African Americans—even free ones—embodied the evil of slavery.

Other writers similarly linked the threat of slavery with a growing population of victims. When proslavery forces argued for opening western territories to slavery in 1819, other whites recoiled at the thought that the enslaved population would grow. One Philadelphian, likely Robert Walsh, argued that "humanity shudders at the idea of the indefinite multiplication of such a class. . . . Herds of slaves must be offensive in their existence as men, to the Deity," as well as to human reason and sensibilities.[67] Strikingly, Walsh slipped between revulsion from slaves' pain and from their presence. Depicting slavery as an "odious blot" on white consciences easily morphed into treating black bodies as that blot.[68] Eighteenth-century rhetoric had treated scarred black bodies as evidence of white moral transgression; the blood of blacks stained white consciences and called down God's vengeance. But as activists called whites to wash slaves' blood from their consciences, it was a small step to call for the physical removal of the black bodies that embodied white sin.

The increasingly graphic nature of antislavery rhetoric fed this trend of collapsing the identity of African Americans into a category of victim.

The image of blacks as victims also made blacks threatening to white Americans. In a popular antislavery story, a master attacked a "faithful slave" without provocation. In one retelling the enslaved man patiently received this unmerited whipping but later attacked the slaveholder. Throwing the master on the ground, the slave stood over him with a knife. The slave said, "You are now in my power, and one of us must die," thus enacting the nightmare of many white slaveholders. But the threatening rebel turned into a sacrificial victim by continuing: "I spare your life, and put an end to my own existence—so saying, he drew the knife across his own throat, and poured his blood onto the bosom of his cruel master."[69] For readers attuned to biblical imagery of blood guilt and redemption through Christ's blood, the imagery was striking. Justice demanded the death of the cruel owner, but the innocent victim sacrificed his own blood in place of the guilty man's. Blood symbolized the white man's guilt, the black man's innocence, and the slaveholder's opportunity to repent. Yet the blood spilled onto the slaveholder also hinted at an alternative ending, in which the blood on the slaveholder's clothes was his own, not the innocent victim's. The self-sacrifice of the enslaved man eased white activists' fears about encouraging black violence, but the threat was barely contained. Stressing the passivity of victims could not fully contain the instability of the category of victim, threatening always to seek revenge if pushed too far. Metaphorical bloodstains on consciences could morph into real blood.

The portrait of enslaved blacks as miserable victims verging on dangerous insurrection thus worried the antislavery writers who used that same image to scare slaveholders.[70] Slavery's critics called on enslaved blacks to submit patiently to suffering, tapping into the religious idea that patient suffering brought spiritual rewards. At an 1808 celebration of the trade's abolition, Jedidiah Morse cautioned black listeners to remember the "benefits" that God brought from their pains. Their Christian freedom "infinitely overbalances all their sufferings."[71] In *The Sorrows of Yamba*, Hannah More's poem about an enslaved woman in St. Lucie, Yamba detailed her fate when sold to a cruel owner. She attempted suicide but was saved by a missionary, who "sooth'd and pitied all my wo" but who also "Told me 'twas the Christian's lot, / Much to suffer here below." Yamba counseled other slaves

whom Massas beat
Ye are stain'd with guilt within;
As ye hope for mercy sweet,
So forgive your Massa's sin.[72]

Writers pitied victims but demanded passivity in response to cruelty and injustice. A pamphleteer warned whites of God's impending judgment but told enslaved Americans to find comfort in realizing that enslaved West Indians endured a crueler fate; slaves should obey their owners and patiently wait for whites to secure their freedom.[73] Such calls for patience and passivity were not unique to antislavery, but fears of black violence made such demands crucial. Activists focused on the moral status of the oppressor; they denounced wicked cruelty while demanding patient submission to it. This split response walked a fine line between challenging and supporting slavery. William Meade, a colonizationist and Episcopal bishop in Virginia, reprinted More's poem in a collection of exhortations to masters, suggesting that parts be read to slaves "to reconcile them to their poor estate." The rest should be read "by the friends of humanity."[74]

By casting blacks as victims, white polemicists had difficulty imagining roles for them other than passive victim or seeker of vengeance. Perpetual victims had no real place in American society. Any improvement of blacks' condition, one colonizationist glumly predicted, would only make them resent the "mortifications, to which they will be constantly exposed *so long as they remain in the country.*"[75] While some whites pinned their hopes on amelioration as a stopgap measure, many others believed that violence necessarily defined racial relations. The mere memory of cruelty precluded harmonious coexistence. Thomas Jefferson famously objected to the emancipation and integration of blacks into American society by invoking the "ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained."[76] The relationship could only be one of victimization; the only question was which race would victimize the other. Not coincidentally, some whites applied a similar logic to their relations with Native Americans. The assumption that whites would always victimize Indians even encouraged some whites in the 1820s and 1830s to call Indian removal a benevolent measure.[77] Andrew Jackson famously argued that philanthropy demanded removal; Indians' choice to remain in close proximity with whites could end only in their extermination.[78] Whites simply could not help themselves.

Imagining blacks as perpetual victims also reinforced their exile from political life. Even as Christianity praised the spiritual status of victims, republican political traditions scorned those who refused to demand "liberty or death" as deserving slavery. As James Henry Hammond—who later built a career as a stridently proslavery politician—put it in 1829 in a Fourth of July speech, "Patience under usurpation is a word for slaves!"[79] Still, for whites who suspected that a natural desire for liberty beat in the breasts of their enslaved laborers, the prospect that slaves would demand "liberty or death" was terrifying. Black victims necessarily lay beyond the pale of the republic; their status as victims made them unsuited for freedom, but the possibility that they would demand that freedom—or revenge—made their presence intolerably threatening. Suffering excluded African Americans from citizenship and made their expulsion necessary.

The rhetoric of victimhood challenged the indefinite perpetuation of slavery, but the path that whites took to reach this conclusion mattered. Whites trod a path through self-referential concerns about white morality and safety. They thus sought solutions that aimed primarily at removing white guilt rather than redressing the wrongs of individual victims. To remove the moral wrongs from American society, white Americans tried to remove the wronged. Thomas Branagan proposed making amends to blacks by sending them to Africa and "thus, like Pilate, let us wash our hands, and shake their blood from our garments."[80] Perhaps he did not fully think through his analogy, but his choice of moral models is striking: Pontius Pilate washed his hands of the guilt of crucifying Jesus, but he did not save Jesus.[81] Colonizationists tried to wash away their guilt without grappling with the question of black rights in America. Restoring whites' own clean consciences, not restoring the human rights, equality, or dignity of blacks, remained colonization's central aim, and this focus on white guilt shaped their approach to slavery. The tendency to view black victims (rather than white actions) as the core problem made removing black victims seem the only plausible escape.

Removing the Evil

Eighteenth-century Americans fantasized about removing both the cruelty and the guilt associated with slavery by removing its victims, but in the early nineteenth century those fantasies crystallized into a political movement, a colonization society, and an African colony. The idea of banishing America's

black population to "a receptacle" in Africa, the new Louisiana Purchase, or Haiti began to seem newly practical, especially after the British activist Granville Sharp sent free blacks to settle along the Sierra Leone River in West Africa in 1787.[82] In December of 1816 the House of Representatives established an "American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States." In 1822 Americans established the colony of Liberia. Colonization's attraction lay in its promise to save whites from the guilt and danger of cruelty. Few whites cared about what it did not offer: to give African Americans full rights to live in freedom—much less equality—in America. Whites' self-referential sense of the problem shaped their strategies and rhetoric. The movement found its appeal in a vision of white responsibility for suffering that compressed white guilt (and its absolution) into the slave trade.

Colonization thrived in the capaciousness and malleability of early nineteenth-century humanitarianism. Colonization both reflected and reinforced white ambivalence about what, precisely, humanitarianism meant for slavery itself. By condemning the trade, colonizationists could claim a humane identity, regardless of their intentions for slavery. Later—by the 1830s—the public debate over slavery radically changed, and abolitionists attacked the humane credentials of colonization, attacking it as a cruel, proslavery conspiracy. The black abolitionist David Walker denounced colonization in his *Appeal* in 1829, and William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization* (1832) led a trickle of whites leaving the movement for abolitionism. Indeed, the practical legacy of colonization for slavery was, at best, mixed. True to the name of the "American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States," the majority of pre-1833 emigrants were free blacks, not slaves. Slaveholders constituted a crucial constituency of the American Colonization Society (ACS). Nor did pure altruism motivate members; fears of slave revolts loomed large. Even Paul Cuffe, an African American colonizationist, argued that emigration would serve "the peace and Tranquility of the World."[83] Yet colonization liberated some slaves, particularly in the Upper South. By 1830, Quakers in North Carolina (which outlawed emancipating slaves without removal) had spent $12,769.51 to colonize 652 African Americans, most sent to Liberia or Haiti.[84] More than five hundred slaveholders liberated and colonized slaves, often at significant expense.[85]

Yet colonization's legacy was only partly about its immediate, concrete effects (or lack thereof) on the institution of slavery. Quite apart from the

questions of whether the movement weakened or reinforced slavery itself, or how many slaves were emancipated or kept in bondage, the colonization movement shaped the structure and rhetoric of the later pro- and antislavery movements. Colonizationists' arguments for the humaneness of colonization shaped how Americans thought about the relationship between slavery and cruelty, as well as the possibilities and limitations of reform efforts.

The colonization movement placed the guilt for slavery squarely on the cruel slave trade.[86] Despite their criticisms of slavery, colonizationists reserved their strongest, unequivocal denunciations for the trade—the inhumanity of which, they claimed, needed no proof.[87] The trade made an easy target; its condemnation sparked no outrage. After all, even if the African slave trade persisted illegally, Congress had outlawed it. People could attack the trade—unlike slavery—without demanding a social revolution. And the rhetoric was convenient. The movement inherited a body of finely honed rhetorical strategies that aimed moral outrage over cruelty at the trade rather than at slavery itself. That same legacy also helped the colonization movement position itself as the legitimate heir of the antitrade movement, lending appeal to colonization's more antislavery constituency.

Even more importantly, the appeal of a trade-oriented rhetoric lay in how it defined blame for slavery. Fixating on the trade alleviated the moral responsibility of slaveholders, a crucial constituency of the American Colonization Society, by positioning them as helpless heirs of a cruel legacy. Colonization thus obscured white ambivalence about perpetuating slavery. Colonization denounced slavery's cruelties but defined undoing the trade—and the arrival of African Americans—as the only humane choice.

Focusing on the trade allowed colonizationists to label slavery cruel without accusing their slaveholding supporters of actual cruelty. Colonizationists' criticisms of cruelty were often studiously vague; they assumed that slavery was cruel *in itself*—as evidenced in its brutal origins—but they rarely extended the blame to the individuals perpetuating enslavement. Nor did they show much interest in bloody details. The gory rhetoric of the early decades of the century receded; tales of specific cruelties yielded to denunciations of cruelty in the abstract. Cruelty permeated the institution, not the individual actions of slaveholders.

By focusing on the trade, colonizationists spread the guilt for slavery geographically. Their rhetoric implied that *all* Americans bore guilt for the ongoing cruelty of slavery; all Americans thus shared the responsibility for

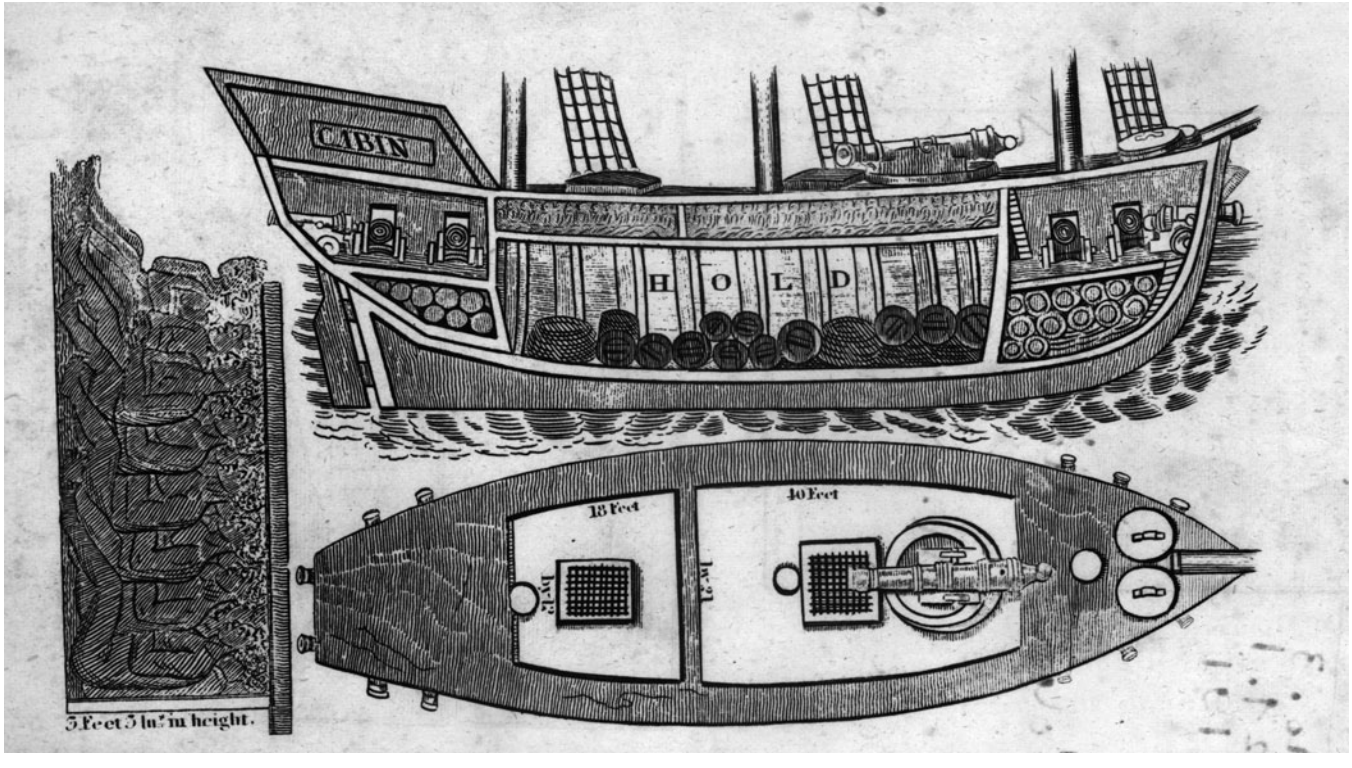
devising a humane escape. Focusing on the slave trade established Northerners' complicity in slavery even as it narrowed their guilt to the trade, rather than their long participation in slavery or their ongoing (and growing) economic dependence on slave-produced cotton. As one colonizationist poet reminded New Englanders:

> The frown of deep, indignant blame,
> Bend not on *Southern climes* alone
> . . . . . .
> And to dark Slavery's yoke severe,
> *Our fathers* helped to bow her neck.[88]

Southerners, colonizationists insisted, were not uniquely responsible for the "national calamity" of slavery.[89] In an effort to secure federal aid for colonization, many northern legislatures passed resolutions affirming that slavery was a "national evil."[90]

If colonizationists expanded the geographic scope of guilt for slavery, they also compressed that guilt into the past. Colonization erased that old guilt and made amends to victims. Around 1833 one New Yorker hoped emigration would be a "retreat to Elysium, . . . in order that [slaves] may be *somewhat compensated* for the painful *privations*" of the trade.[91] By treating colonization as literally reversing the trade, the New Yorker ignored the increasingly native character of the enslaved population (the legal trade had ended twenty-five years earlier) and collapsed all the cruelty of slavery into the trade. Colonizationists repeatedly compressed the moral responsibility for cruelty into the dank holds of slave ships. In his *Letters on the Colonization Society* (1832) Mathew Carey, a retired printer, reproduced an engraving of slaves crammed into a ship's narrow hold. The image, complete with a close-up view of cramped bodies, depicted slavery through depictions of the suffering of the Middle Passage.[92] Colonization here appeared an alternative to and atonement for the cruelty of the slave trade.

Activists likewise saw colonization as repaying the moral debt incurred by their ancestors' cruelty. Pennsylvania's Senate echoed many white colonizationists when it suggested that colonization would atone for the trade; the word *atone* appeared with striking frequency in colonization literature.[93] Colonization washed away the guilt for slavery by retracing the trade's watery path and returning the captives stolen from Africa. But if colonization could not entirely undo history, perhaps it could transform white sin into a provi-



The imagery of the slave trade loomed large in colonizationist rhetoric in the early nineteenth century. Colonizationists blamed the slave trade for creating the problem of cruelty. This image, printed in 1832, depicted colonization as the reversal of the African slave trade, even though most enslaved blacks in 1832 had been born and raised in America, not Africa. Mathew Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society,* 4th ed. (1832). Reproduced from an original held by the Department of Special Collections of the University Libraries of Notre Dame.

dential blessing for Africa: emigrating blacks would Christianize and civilize Africa, offering "glorious recompense for all her sufferings."[94]

Not only could colonization absolve white guilt for the trade; it would also plug the flow of illegal slaving voyages. Colonizationists hoped that an African colony would provide a base for action against the illegal trade. Mathew Carey boasted that Liberia's existence saved captives from "the horrors of the passage" and slavery; he confidently predicted the trade's imminent demise.[95] Carey was hardly alone in his optimism. Countless writers boasted that colonization would dry up the "polluted stream" of the trade and all its "barbarous cruelties"; by the 1830s colonizationists defended the movement's antislavery credentials by citing its work against the "*inhuman* and *barbarous* traffic."[96] The Virginia branch of the American Colonization Society understood colonization as transforming African trade from a "monument to the rapacity and cruelty of the civilized world" into moral commerce in nonhuman goods.[97] Colonization, in short, benevolently undid the slave trade's cruelty.

Most importantly, the trade ensured that blacks would always suffer as victims in America—whether as victims of slaveholders' whips or of the physical or metaphorical cruelties of freedom. Emancipation offered no escape; only colonization could "rescue" blacks from "the disqualifications, the degradation, and the proscription."[98] Colonization fed upon and nourished the idea that free blacks lived in greater misery than enslaved blacks themselves.[99] Virginia colonizationists explained that free blacks lived in "the middle ground between freedom & slavery," enjoying neither true freedom nor the "careless security" of slavery. Enslaved blacks and whites alike rejected the "miserable outcast."[100] When Edward Coles decided to free his enslaved laborers in 1819, James Madison praised his efforts but worried about the value of freedom. He wished that Coles's "philanthropy would compleat its object, by changing their colour as well as their legal condition. Without this they seemed destined to a privation of that moral rank & those social blessings, which give to freedom more than half its value."[101] If slavery was cruelty, emancipation offered no escape. True cruelty lay in the presence of blacks in America and in the cruel history that prevented them from enjoying real freedom.

By presenting colonization as the only escape from cruelty, the movement expanded the meaning of both cruelty and white responsibility for black suffering. For decades antitrade activists had focused on the whites who

deliberately and maliciously inflicted pain on Africans and their enslaved descendants. Activists placed the blame squarely on slave traders and, to a lesser extent, those who purchased slaves. Critics focused on specific cruelties, specific acts, and specific choices. Now colonizationists viewed cruelty not primarily as a specific choice but as a system that radically constrained the choices of present-day actors. The true cruelty of slavery lay in the near inescapability of a cruel situation, rooted in the choices of previous generations. That cruelty lay in the original act of enslavement, which left whites unable to find a humane way out, save through colonization. Cruelty inhered in the structure of American race relations, flowing out of the interactions of a powerful white race and a dependent, historically victimized, black race. Without colonization whites could choose only between the harshness of slavery and the misery of poverty.

In this logic *all* black suffering in America fell into the sphere of moral responsibility of all whites, where it would remain until colonization undid the wrongs of the trade. Colonizationists excused slaveholders and other whites from much of the *blame* for cruelty by pinning blame on their colonial ancestors. Yet colonizationists also called whites to take responsibility for ending that suffering, if only for their own protection. Even as colonizationists castigated slaveholders who bloodied slaves' backs with the lash, they denounced slaveholders who abandoned their responsibilities by releasing slaves into the pains of freedom in America. Cruelty included not only what slaveholders did but also what they *failed* to do. If whites could not easily extricate themselves from cruelty, half-steps still mattered. Humane owners should support colonization, but until it succeeded, they should alleviate the cruelties of slavery. Colonization grew alongside gradualist movements, and together the movements taught Americans that while slavery itself would only slowly disappear, whites should show humaneness in a variety of smaller ways.

Slavery and Freedom

Colonization and other gradualist movements flourished in the malleability of early humanitarianism, and in turn they stretched the meaning of humanitarianism. By focusing moral outrage on the trade's cruelties and moral hope on the possibilities of removal, colonization reinforced the illusion of humanitarian unity, obscuring the ambivalence white Americans actually felt about perpetuating slavery. At the start of the nineteenth cen-

tury, few Americans publicly claimed that slavery was humane, much less that African Americans were happy in slavery or wished to be enslaved. To the contrary, most slaveholding whites worried that slaves thirsted for freedom. Yet over several decades many whites softened their criticisms of slaveholders and denunciations of cruelty. Rather than focusing on the inherent cruelty of slavery, whites stressed the power of slaveholders to ease the pains of slavery. Initially, this softened image of slaveholders only hinted—and faintly—at a new view of slavery. This image of slaveholders depended on the assumption that slavery was a problem; it depicted slaveholders as humane people who were trapped in a difficult situation and thus anxious to mitigate the severity of slavery. Yet the willingness to treat slaveholders as humane—if helpless—slowly altered white Americans' understanding of the relationship between slavery and cruelty.

The tendency to downplay cruelty grew, in part, out of white Americans' reluctance to cede a moral high ground to Britain during and after the Revolutionary War. The acrimony of the revolution encouraged white Americans to fixate on the (British) slave trade as the source of American slavery. The first draft of the Declaration of Independence blamed Britain for foisting the trade on a reluctant America, while Britons denounced revolutionary rhetoric as the hypocritical "yelps" of cruel slave drivers.[102] The cultural rivalry continued after the war, and the War of 1812 inflamed it.[103] As Britain extricated itself from the trade and boasted an antislavery identity (despite the inconvenient existence of its slave colonies), white Americans resented British criticisms of slaveholding cruelty.

Slavery was not really the primary issue; both sides simply wanted to be the more humane culture. White Americans thus responded to criticisms of slavery by comparing American and British behavior. Without denying American cruelty outright, writers diminished that cruelty by accusing the British of greater cruelty. In his 1819 *Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America,* Robert Walsh of Maryland flipped attention from American slavery to the British slave trade. He reminded readers that parliamentarians laughed and "listened complacently" to heart-rending and "atrocious" stories about the trade; their cruelty far outweighed America's.[104] The guilt of the British "seducer," he insisted, outweighed that of "seduced" Americans.[105] To further cast Americans as helpless heirs of British sin, he boasted (incorrectly) that Americans, unlike Britons, had

never formally defended the trade.[106] Walsh placed the blame for perpetuating slavery on slavery's origins, which lay squarely in Britain.

Walsh softened the image of American slaveholding by pointing back at the British trade, but he also took aim at Britain by comparing American slaves and British paupers. To defend white Americans' humanity, Walsh challenged British humanity toward poor whites. "The victim of American barbarity" lived in greater comfort than poverty-stricken Britons, and Walsh scoured parliamentary records for details about British poverty to prove it.[107] The point was not to defend slavery; Walsh readily admitted its "intrinsic horrors and miseries."[108] Rather, he denied charges of *unique* cruelty and deflated British claims of innocence. He defended Americans and attacked British moral superiority not in a freestanding discussion of slavery but in a thick book fighting against a "war" on "our national reputation."[109] Slaveholders might take comfort in Walsh's comparison, but the point was to prove Britons' *in*humanity and only secondarily to show white Americans' humaneness.

Walsh's argument signaled a growing tendency among white Americans to compare slaves' suffering to even greater misery endured by other groups, especially the free poor. Such arguments did not typically aim to defend slavery itself; even antislavery writers indulged in comparisons. Heman Humphrey, Amherst College's president and temperance reformer, evoked the misery of the slave trade to illustrate the horrors of alcohol abuse. Conjuring up images of the Middle Passage, he urged readers to sympathize with the trade's victims. But the intemperate person fared worse. "Follow him," Humphrey commanded, "through the *middle passage* from health, and freedom, and happiness, to all the woes of habitual intoxication."[110] Humphrey did not deny slave suffering; indeed, his argument worked only if readers already pitied slaves. Yet the comparison also signaled a growing tendency to downplay slavery's cruelty by comparing slaves' suffering to the routine suffering of life. White Americans increasingly compared slave pain to the suffering of the poor—and they tipped the scale of pity in favor of the poor.

Initially, such comparisons took their meaning from the notion that humanity required at least a vague squeamishness about slavery, but by the late 1820s that facade of unanimity showed multiple hairline fractures. Divorced from squeamishness, comparisons between slavery and poverty took on radically new meanings. In an 1829 address to the Agricultural Society of South Carolina, the younger Charles Cotesworth Pinckney argued that "if the ab-

sence of mental and bodily pain be the test of human happiness," slaves fared better than "half the freemen in the world."[111] Not only were slaves well cared for, but slavery even provided emotional security, since slaves died without the anxiety of wondering what would happen to their families. Pinckney discounted the severity of punishments, which differed little from punishments meted out to unruly sailors, soldiers, and children. Besides, self-interest protected slaves, while the poor had no such protections.[112] In short, slavery was more humane than poverty. Where Walsh used comparisons to defend American culture, Pinckney used them to defend slavery per se. Pinckney denounced colonization as an "absurdity and cruelty," concluding that there was no "humane and rational means" of emancipating slaves. Only slavery itself was truly humane.[113] Walsh defended American humanity vis-à-vis Britain's inhumanity; Pinckney vindicated the humanity of slavery against freedom.

Pinckney's outright defense of slavery on the grounds of humaneness horrified colonizationists. Yet they had unintentionally helped create it. Despite colonizationists' outrage at Pinckney's unabashedly proslavery conclusion, they supported amelioration rather than immediate emancipation.[114] They agreed that freedom in America offered little of value to blacks. Whatever the movement's intentions, it created a logic for defining slavery as a more humane alternative to the cruelty of freedom. The basic structure of colonization rhetoric depended on negative comparisons of freedom to slavery; slavery might be cruel, but it would be worse to emancipate slaves without removing them. Only removal transformed emancipation from an act of abandonment to an act of humaneness. Pinckney simply denied that removal offered a humane possibility.

Despite colonizationists' criticisms of slavery, their rhetoric weakened support for emancipationist solutions to slavery because they depicted freedom as a threat to the happiness of both blacks and whites. The language of benevolence sometimes offered only the thinnest of veneers for other motives: the *Kentucky Farmer* lamented that wretched conditions led free blacks to crime. Crime rates, the economic burden of poor relief, and fears of an "idle," disgruntled population often loomed larger than altruistic concerns about black suffering. Nevertheless, writers often framed such concerns with the language of compassion. The *Kentucky Farmer* blamed free blacks for slaves' pain at the sight of unattainable freedom.[115] William Thornton, a reluctant slaveholder who counted himself a "decided enemy to slavery," used a similar logic to warn that the "partial good" of individual manumis-

sions would "encrease the general evil" of slave misery.[116] Virginia colonizationists similarly pitched their fears of black criminality in terms of humaneness: only the most severe punishments would restrain free blacks, forcing states to resort to measures "painful to every feeling heart."[117] Whether colonizationists did so sincerely or not, they invoked humaneness against emancipation.

Colonization shaped discussions of slavery by questioning the benefits of emancipation. Samuel Miller, a staunchly antislavery but procolonization minister, reflected a common view when he denounced the "cruelty of benevolence": freeing unprepared slaves.[118] An Alabama supporter of the ACS worried that "mistaken ideas of humanity" would lead to the miseries of "indiscriminate emancipation."[119] Colonization reassured slaveholders that, while slavery was wrong, they acted most humanely by holding slaves temporarily. Colonizationists did not create the suspicion of emancipation, but by qualifying their criticisms of slavery with criticisms of emancipation, they gave the idea humanitarian credibility. Slaveholders who proposed freeing their slaves could expect warnings that, despite their intentions, emancipation was inhumane. When Edward Coles told Thomas Jefferson in 1814 that he wanted to quit slaveholding, Jefferson warned him that manumissions were illegal, and if Coles sold the slaves, they might end up with a cruel owner. Until Coles could do "more" for his slaves, he should treat them well and "protect them from ill usage." But, Jefferson chided, humane owners should "be led by no repugnancies to abdicate them, and our duties to them."[120]

The reliance on amelioration as a temporary solution also softened white views of slaveholding. Later, in the 1830s, abolitionists denounced amelioration as a proslavery ploy, but in the early nineteenth century, the rhetorical value of amelioration lay in its malleability. Amelioration simultaneously gave hope to slavery's critics and mollified slaveholders; amelioration was both a small step toward emancipation and an alternative to *immediate* emancipation. One polemicist wrote that gentle treatment prepared enslaved people for freedom: the slave spared the "lash, is thereby partially emancipated from his mental thraldom."[121] Yet amelioration also undermined the idea that emancipation was needed. If all owners acted humanely, one man contended in 1819, "it would be questionable, whether emancipation of Blacks would be a blessing."[122]

Across the ideological spectrum, Americans took comfort in the idea that

slavery was softening. Slavery, Robert Walsh explained, had undergone "a great and striking amelioration" since the revolution: a greater concern with human rights and "a quicker sympathy with human sufferings" turned public sentiment against "habitual severity."[123] Walsh's opinion was widely shared. When Philadelphia Quakers sent out a survey in 1825 about slave conditions and domestic slave trading, they inquired whether there was a "disposition generally manifest for the melioration of their condition?"[124] Most respondents answered yes. Even those most skeptical about the reality of amelioration acknowledged the consensus.[125]

This confidence in amelioration had significant, though not always immediately obvious, political implications. Not only did it imply that slavery *could* be detached from cruelty, but it also discouraged criticism of slaveholders. After visiting the Carolinas and Georgia, Reuben Legett, an antislavery New Yorker, contended that slavery had mellowed so much that critics should refrain from "strong terms of reproach" for owners. He suspected that denunciations of cruelty were not fully warranted: rather than "seeing cruelty & wretchedness at every step as I had expected, I found the masters were kind harted [*sic*] men & the Slaves in a good degree contented & comfortable."[126] This suspicion—from a self-identified critic of slavery—signaled the weakening of conventional assumptions that slavery was cruel.

Nevertheless, the softened image of slaveholders only hinted at a nascent disposition to view slavery as benevolent. Rather than viewing slavery as intrinsically humane, slaveholders and their defenders justified their personal conduct in relative terms. Strikingly, such slaveholders typically compared themselves to other slaveholders rather than claiming the universal humanity of slavery. Initially, the West Indies provided comparative fodder. In 1819 Obadiah Brown received an angry earful when he tried to prevent the return of a black boy living in Rhode Island to slavery in Georgia: the boy was not being sent to "the fetters and cat-o-ninetails [*sic*] of a West-India planter" but to "a good Master."[127] Even the gruesome nature of earlier antislavery rhetoric offered comfort. Next to stories of slaveholders hurling slaves into boiling cane juice, slaveholders needed to do little to look humane. Comparisons to the slave trade or West Indian slavery set the bar for humaneness low by setting expectations for cruelty high; slaveholders showed their restraint vis-à-vis such expectations. A white driver proudly reported to his mother that he punished slaves for not working enough by depriving them of meat rather than flogging them—a fate reserved for liars.[128] But even neigh-

bors provided points of comparison, and people claimed humanity by protecting slaves from the cruelty of others. Self-styled humane slaveholders wrote elaborate contracts to protect their slaves from cruelty when they hired them out; the Kentuckian Alexander Bullitt's 1802 contracts demanded that his slaves "be humanely treated."[129] By 1830 such displays of concern about *other* slaveholders' cruelty had grown frequent. Slaveholders blamed each other for neglecting and abusing hired slaves and cast themselves as the humane protectors of slaves against violence from whites and blacks.[130] At its core humaneness was a relative concept.

Slaveholders thus saw themselves as humane not because slavery was intrinsically benevolent but precisely because they ameliorated a cruel institution. And amelioration had clear limits; it did not preclude violence. Slaveholders claimed humaneness simply by not taking their full legal rights. Distinguishing amelioration from "excessive" lenity, they insisted that humane slaveholders mete out "reasonable punishment" when needed "without fail."[131] Amelioration permitted hard labor and whippings; the Virginian David Ross insisted that slaves owed him obedience and hard labor in "compensation for my benevolence."[132] Slaveholders saw themselves as benevolent in comparison to other owners, but they never doubted their right to punish "rascally" slaves.[133]

Pinckney's arguments notwithstanding, most Americans—even slaveholders—did not typically defend slavery as humane in itself in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Certainly some Americans saw the potential to defend slavery as humane, but in public the softening image of slaveholding took shape within the context of criticism of the *principle* of slavery. If those criticisms were perfunctory—and they often were—public culture demanded them. Doubts about the humaneness of emancipation thrived in the fluidity and capaciousness of early nineteenth-century humanitarianism. By fixating on the distant sins of the past and the equally distant moral absolution of the future, colonization and other forms of gradualism disguised and reinforced white ambivalence about slavery. Humaneness condemned the villains of the slave trade, but when humanity turned its gaze on slaveholders, harsh denunciations faded into murmurs of pity for the entrapped souls who could not escape the moral taint of slaveholding. But it was still a taint. Pinckney startled Americans by defending the humaneness of slavery against the cruelty of emancipation, but they were startled not because the basic ideas were radically new but because Pinckney abandoned that ambivalence about slavery. By

refusing to pay public homage to the idea that slavery was an inhumane institution at its core, he exposed the tensions in white rhetoric about slavery. White Americans had relentlessly linked the idea that slavery was cruel to the idea that emancipation was cruel. Pinckney's argument signaled the trouble brewing as Americans began to disentangle the two ideas.

By the 1830s humanitarianism had stretched to encompass a growing range of alternatives to slavery's cruelty, ranging from emancipation to colonization to amelioration. The expansion of humanitarianism only strengthened its hold on moral thinking. Humaneness commanded wide support because it could mean different things to different people, as long as they voiced a pious regret that slavery existed. Humanitarianism could spread so widely precisely because it was so malleable. The language of humaneness and cruelty worked because it avoided tough questions about African Americans' equality or rights, because it focused attention on white souls and black bodies. In the context of the colonization movement, humaneness asked little of white Americans. Would-be humanitarians did not need to allow blacks a role in American society, much less an equal role; humanitarians only needed to pity suffering blacks. This malleable humaneness could unite Americans across a long ideological spectrum; even slaveholders joined in denouncing cruelty.

Yet the stretching of humanitarianism also heightened the tensions and contradictions developing in Americans' ideas about the implications of humaneness. Pity for the suffering of enslaved blacks did not necessarily motivate colonizationists. Yet it mattered that they persistently depicted blacks as perpetual victims of an amorphously defined cruelty. The choice to frame colonization as the only humane path between the Scylla of cruel emancipation and the Charybdis of cruel slavery shaped the discourses of slavery for decades. Colonization's demands to wash the blood of slaves off America's hands echoed throughout the antebellum era. Yet by treating freedom in America without colonization as a half-good and near evil, the movement encouraged the idea that blacks would suffer less in slavery than in freedom if colonization were not an option.

Colonization nurtured two competing strains of thinking about cruelty. White Americans attacked both the cruelty of slavery and the cruelty of emancipation, but only colonization and gradualism could really hold the two ideas together. The ideas would ultimately split into polarities defining the rhetoric for both antislavery and proslavery humanitarian arguments.

More radical antislavery and proslavery movements coalesced in the 1830s, eager to destroy the movement that preceded them. The colonization movement did not die, but it no longer commanded the rhetorical center of the debate. The movement, however, continued to play a critical role: it provided the rhetoric for antebellum polemicists to attack and to defend slavery.

Early nineteenth-century debates over slavery lacked the rhetorical clarity that characterized the sharp antagonism of the 1830s. Amelioration of slavery's conditions and emancipation were not yet mutually incompatible programs but shades on a continuum of humanitarian alternatives to the status quo. Polemicists on all sides of the issue agreed on the value of humanizing slavery, and many saw this as a gradual step toward the ultimate removal of the system. In the coming decades, this continuum—already under serious strain—pulled apart.

CHAPTER FOUR

Politicizing Humaneness, 1832–1839

By 1830 humaneness had grown deep roots in American moral thinking, but beneath the surface those roots were tangled. Humaneness could mean any number of things in practice, and early reform efforts only reinforced the tendency to define humanitarianism broadly. The attraction of early rhetoric about cruelty lay in that malleability and capaciousness. Consciously or unconsciously, early reformers pitched their cases to appeal broadly and to spread the blame for slavery's cruelty across America. Reformers' insistence on gradual solutions encouraged them to see a wide variety of short-term reforms as humane alternatives to a cruel status quo. Humanitarianism stretched into a long continuum of concrete solutions to slavery's cruelty, held together by the belief that gradually humanizing individual behavior would slowly bring dramatic change.

By 1832 this capacious interpretation of humaneness was starting to come apart, creating two competing and mutually exclusive claims to humanitarianism. In 1832 William Lloyd Garrison joined black activists in accusing the colonization movement of supporting cruelty and slavery. The logic of gradualism and colonization, Garrison argued, amounted to the suggestion that

"slave-drivers shall apply the lash to the scarred and bleeding backs of their victims somewhat less frequently."[1] Cruelty did not admit gradual or halfway solutions; cruelty—even in small doses—corrupted human beings to the core. Opposition to cruelty permitted only one outcome: emancipation and the complete abolition of slavery. Humanizing the institution no longer passed muster, even as a halfway measure. Garrison also defined cruelty and humaneness more narrowly and univocally than many other white critics of slavery. For decades gradual reform efforts had encouraged white critics of slavery to denounce slaveholding as cruel, even while denouncing the alternatives as cruel. The new Garrisonian breed of reformers, in contrast, located cruelty not in a broad swath of unpalatable choices but in the one choice to allow slavery to continue. Such reformers radically narrowed the meanings of humaneness and cruelty. Abolition alone was genuinely humane; humaneness permitted no other solution.

By shifting the center of the slavery debate from colonization to abolition, abolitionism drove a wedge into Americans' conceptions of humaneness. In the early decades of the century, colonizationists had labeled both slavery and American freedom as inhumane, and, initially, these arguments worked together. True benevolence meant removing African Americans from twin cruelties: slavery and American freedom. But as the growth of immediate abolitionism in the 1830s shifted the debate away from removal and to immediate emancipation, this redirection tore the two strains of rhetoric apart. Abolitionists followed colonizationists in denouncing the cruelty of slavery; at the same time, however, defenders of slavery echoed the colonizationists' attack on the cruelty of emancipation. Numerous whites had already accepted colonizationists' premise that freedom was a cruel sham and thus rejected immediate abolition. Not all critics of abolition supported slavery fully, but their skepticism about immediate abolition lent legitimacy to a proslavery attack on emancipation as cruel.[2] By the 1830s a significant number of slaveholders and their defenders unabashedly proclaimed slavery a genuinely humane alternative to the cruelty of freedom.

The polarization of humaneness both reflected and reinforced the growing intensity of the slavery debate; by the 1830s Americans had growing reasons to care about slavery. Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831 lent urgency to calls for action—both for emancipation and for tighter control over potentially rebellious enslaved laborers. From abroad, reports of British West Indian emancipation in 1834 pushed the prospect of wholesale abolition into the attention

of Americans. Even as abolition seemed enticingly or alarmingly possible, economic forces tightened the grip of slavery on American life, making hopes that slavery would fade away without intervention seem increasingly illusory. Far from fading, slavery expanded with the growth of textile factories and the spread of cotton culture into the Southwest. As westward migration extended the reach of slavery, demands for new slaveholding territories made it difficult to claim that slavery was, as some said, a dying evil. Slaveholders grew increasingly willing to defend slavery, and critics grew increasingly willing to attack it.

As Americans debated the future of slavery, they carved out moral languages in stark opposition to each other. In the process, these conflicts reshaped views of humanitarianism. For decades humanitarianism had ecumenically supported myriad conclusions. Now parties abandoned that ecumenism, defining the implications of humaneness in competing and mutually exclusive ways. Polemicists drew a clear line between humaneness and cruelty on the issue of emancipation; the only question was which side was the humane one. Both sides, however, still drew on similar moral assumptions, especially theories of sympathy. As abolitionists claimed that slavery's cruelty crushed any possibility of gradual reform, they politicized sympathy. Sympathy now sparked fierce battles between critics and defenders of slavery. For decades ambivalence had pervaded Americans' attitudes toward sympathy and moral formation; now that ambivalence provided rhetorical fodder for the competing sides. Humanitarianism had split.

Sympathy and Practical Benevolence

In its earliest days the rhetoric of humane concern for slave pain began with concern about the moral standing of those who perpetrated and observed cruelty. Pain itself entered moral thinking indirectly; the experiences of victims—or their rights to be free of pain—mattered much less to eighteenth-century reformers than the wrongness of inflicting that pain. Antebellum moralists, like their predecessors, cared a great deal about the moral status of cruel tormentors and observers, and they continued to define cruelty as evidence of deep moral disorder. All good people, in contrast, sympathized with sufferers. But antebellum moral philosophy and religion also increasingly emphasized the role of human agency and choice, not only in causing pain but also in preventing or relieving it. Moral philosophers, minis-

ters, and reformers in the 1830s thus routinely stressed the moral responsibility of human beings to relieve pain and not simply to pity it.

True sympathy and benevolence, moralists insisted, led to action; benevolence could not simply be a kindly inner disposition. Proponents of active benevolence insisted that benevolence included not only feeling the pain of others but also acting to relieve it. At the College of South Carolina in 1831, a student learned in Robert Henry's moral philosophy class that feeling others' pain was "a necessary stimulus to the relief."[3] In 1831 fellow South Carolinian Matthew Richey called for effective benevolence, which "*acts*, as well as *feels*." Christ provided the perfect example of active benevolence: "It is not however in the tenderness in which his soul dissolved over scenes of suffering and affliction—nor is it in the tears that suffused his sacred face—nor is it in the pathetic language in which he occasionally expressed his compassion—but it is in the beneficient [*sic*] doings of his hand, that we are presented with unceasing and unequivocal indications of his noble and effective philanthropy."[4]

Eighteenth-century sympathy had emphasized pity for victims; antebellum sympathy now demanded the relief of sufferers. Moral philosophers and ministers tried to rescue sympathy from any hint of association with passive sentiment, especially in novel reading: the emotional pleasures of fellow feeling, however delightful, no longer defined the benevolent individual. Moralists still praised the sympathetic souls who spilled tears over suffering victims—but only so long as such tears were merely a prelude to benevolent *action* to relieve the suffering.

The new emphasis on the active relief of suffering reflected the growing role of pain itself in moral thought. Eighteenth-century moralists had come to the problem of pain indirectly; they analyzed people's reactions to pain primarily to prove the benevolence of human nature or the possibility of natural human morality. In contrast, rather than aiming to demonstrate the benevolence of human nature, antebellum moral philosophers directed their efforts at showing how the world was governed and ordered by laws of morality. These laws punished immoral acts with pain and rewarded moral acts with pleasure, thus teaching and enforcing the laws of morality. This idea was not in itself new; antebellum moral philosophy shifted the emphasis of moral thinking about pain rather than radically changing the content. By emphasizing that God's moral government relied on natural, earthly rewards and punishments, moral philosophers gave pain and pleasure more direct roles in morality.

Moral laws, like natural laws, worked as a matter of cause and effect. Rewards or punishments *inevitably* followed actions; such outcomes flowed directly out of the nature of the act itself, regardless of an actor's intentions. Intentions still mattered for assessing an individual's guilt or innocence, but the consequences revealed the nature of the act itself. Moral philosophers insisted that human beings could and should read moral meaning in the consequences of actions—not simply people's reactions to those consequences. Moral philosophers focused on earthly pain as a natural, inevitable consequence of vice; the pain resulting from an act revealed its moral character. This insistence that pain inevitably followed vicious actions pushed pain from the periphery into the center of moral thought.

As moral philosophers insisted that pain always followed vice, they fought over the precise role that pain ought to play in moral decisions, but the concept of a moral order that rewarded virtue and punished vice appealed widely across philosophical and religious lines. Moralists and ministers who stressed the primacy of revelation still found much to like in the idea of an intelligible, easily deciphered, natural moral order. A natural moral order reinforced God's commands, and it proved especially attractive in an increasingly religiously diverse society without an established church. The promise of earthly rewards or punishments could, in a pinch, convince even the irreligious to behave.[5]

William Paley—and the controversy that his works engendered—helped popularize and reinforce the ideas that pain followed directly from vice and that morality brought pleasure. The British divine developed a Christian utilitarianism palatable to many Americans in his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) and *Natural Theology* (1802). Paley's version of utilitarianism did not reduce morality to a calculation of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number—as did Jeremy Bentham's—but it did tie morality to the pain or pleasure resulting from an act.[6] God, Paley argued, had designed the world to maximize happiness. Because God willed the pleasure of His creatures, one fulfilled one's moral and religious duties by spreading pleasure.[7] The moral code was a divine guide to happiness. Paley mattered not because he was original but because he expressed a popular set of ideas in an appealing way. In the early nineteenth century, and especially by the 1820s, his works attracted a wide readership and a gaggle of imitators. Paley's ideas circulated widely through college courses and churches. Ministers soaked in Paley's ideas—often, as Lewis Tappan noted, "guilty of plagiarism"—preached from

thousands of pulpits, spreading his views to congregations without their own college educations.[8]

Despite—or because of—the popularity of Paley's arguments, Paley generated controversy, especially by the 1830s. Many moral philosophers squirmed at his unabashed utilitarianism. Were actions truly wrong *because* they brought pain, or did pain simply follow vice? Should calculations of pleasure and pain really determine moral decisions? Would focusing on pleasure and pain reinforce selfishness? Should not people choose to be good simply out of love of virtue or love of God, not the hope of reward? Paley's lack of interest in either the moral sense or conscience irritated the many American moralists who continued to value the idea of an inborn moral faculty that directed people to virtue without regard for consequences.

Yet controversy helped spread Paley's ideas. Professors who harbored doubts about Paley often assigned him, if only to refute him more conveniently. But trotting Paley out for refutation did not always have the intended effect; Thomas Upham griped to the president of Alabama University (later University of Alabama) that Paley's effect "on the minds of the students is not, in all respects, such as could be wished."[9] Antebellum educational patterns ensured that even when professors criticized Paley, students became thoroughly acquainted with his ideas. Antebellum education centered on a small set of assigned texts; students pored over them on their own and went through them in painstaking detail in classroom recitations.[10] At many colleges students read at least one of Paley's works and often several, including his *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, *Natural Theology*, and (his most controversial work) *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*.[11] The typical well-educated man was familiar with Paley's views, and women might encounter him in their own moral education.[12] Whether they praised him or hated him, Americans knew Paley.[13]

Crucially, the controversy reinforced Paley's core idea that pain and pleasure reliably indicated an act's moral character. Despite attacking Paley, moral philosophers shared many of his ideas; they focused their objections on his *conclusions* about the nature of duty and motivation, but they echoed many of his presuppositions. Critics accused Paley of conflating morality and pleasure, even as they insisted that God had inseparably linked morality and pleasure, vice and pain. At South Carolina College James Henley Thornwell accused Paley of claiming that whatever is expedient is right. But Thornwell insisted that the converse was true: "whatever is right is expedient."[14] Francis Wayland

similarly blasted Paley, both at Brown and in his popular textbook, for diminishing the role of conscience. Yet Wayland argued that "every right action is followed, in some way, with pleasure or benefit to the individual; and every wrong one by pain or discomfort," regardless of the individual's guilt or innocence.[15] Paley's critics accepted the basic claim that morality resulted in pleasure and immorality in pain, even as they debated the precise nature of moral duty. Such distinctions mattered philosophically: they warded off full-fledged utilitarianism. But zeroing in on Paley's logical fallacies strengthened the basic premise that immorality meant pain.

Indeed, Paley's critics distanced themselves so far from Paley because their ideas veered so closely to his. Moral philosophers destroyed utilitarianism to prove that they were not themselves utilitarians.[16] But antebellum moral philosophy, particularly in the hands of Francis Wayland, the Baptist president of Brown, emphasized that pain flowed directly out of vice. Concern about Paley created a demand for a new textbook, which Wayland provided in 1835 with his *Elements of Moral Science*. The book proved popular, making its way (despite Wayland's criticism of slavery) even into southern universities, including the University of Louisiana and Alabama University.[17] People, Wayland taught, should evaluate an act by considering its tendency to produce pleasure or pain. Vice brought misery as a "consequence of the *action*" itself, regardless of an actor's guilt or innocence.[18] Pleasure and pain revealed God's will with the clarity of revelation; the crime, disease, and misery resulting from intemperance proved that God "intended to forbid intemperance as though He had said so by a voice from heaven."[19] Despite insisting on the importance of the conscience as a guide, Wayland was *epistemologically* utilitarian: actions were not wrong *because* they produced pain, but one *recognized* the wrongness of actions in the pain they caused.

By strengthening the popular notion that evil actions produced pain and moral improvement led to pleasure, this epistemological utilitarianism encouraged the idea that happiness and suffering were amenable to human action. The idea was already gaining ground because of the growing theological tendency to downplay, or even deny, original sin as an ineradicable source of suffering and depravity. Unitarianism and many forms of evangelicalism stressed that human beings held their salvation—and earthly happiness—in their own hands. Evangelical revivalists called people to repent for their sins immediately, and they stressed that human beings did, in fact, have the ability to change their ways and to follow God's commands. Sinners, as

Charles Finney explained, were not only "bound to change their own hearts"; they could *actually* do so through personal effort. The world, he added, "is divided into two great political parties": one, the party of selfishness, affirmed loyalty to Satan, while the party of benevolence served God. As sinners threw off their loyalties to Satan, the repentant souls both saved themselves from hell's torments and tried to save others from the earthly torments of sin. An army of converts fought to achieve God's benevolent will of universal happiness.[20]

Revivalism encouraged the growth of benevolent associations that aimed to cleanse society of its moral and physical evils. Spiritual reform led to moral reform, which led to earthly happiness. Some reformers even saw reform and perfectionism as the start of an earthly golden age. Other Americans doubted that reformers could uproot *all* suffering, and they blanched at the thought of remaking society in the pursuit of perfection. But whether they dreamed of millennial perfection or more limited reforms, countless Americans hoped that individual repentance and reform would at least alleviate earthly woes. They could change the world one soul at a time; as sinners repented and threw off Satan's yoke, they would reform their lives, remake society, and find happiness.[21] Sobriety would uproot the misery that afflicted the intemperate, their families, and society. By the 1830s, swarms of benevolent associations in the North and South fought social misery by targeting individual behaviors: crime, prostitution, intemperance, and overindulgence.[22] In 1826 the American Temperance Society kicked off a campaign to transform American alcohol use, sparing Americans the individual pains and social misery produced by intemperance. In the 1830s Sylvester Graham's followers turned to vegetarianism, exercise, and sexual moderation, explicitly linking spiritual reform and physical health. Earthly pain increasingly seemed the result of moral disorder, and reform promised to end suffering.

As moralists emphasized the role of immoral choices in causing pain and the role of moral reform in relieving pain, they helped politicize pain. For decades moralists, ministers, and activists had called Americans to denounce cruelty and sympathize with the sufferings of its victims. The confidence that suffering was amenable to human action, encouraged by religion and moral philosophy alike, suited the new stridency of Garrisonian abolitionists, who now demanded that Americans not only pity the sufferings of slaves but also reject the perpetuation of slavery. For abolitionists humaneness could no longer mean simply a pious regret that slavery existed or a vague squeamish-

ness about its practices; it meant working, without delay, for the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of enslaved laborers.

Debating Sympathy: Moral Formation and the Cause of "Suffering Humanity"

By the 1830s Americans were well schooled in the notion that sympathizing with sufferers nurtured moral development, while cruelty crushed it. How one responded to the pain of sentient beings, including animals, both defined and shaped one's character; a well-developed moral character depended on sympathy. Indeed, one of Francis Wayland's favorite titles for Christ was "sympathizing High Priest."[23] American Protestant Christianity focused ever more relentlessly on morality, precisely at the moment that morality became tied to sympathy with pain.[24] Definitions of Christianity increasingly hinged on the sympathy and humanity of its practitioners. As one philanthropist chided readers, "if we see our fellow-beings suffering with cold, or hunger, or destitute of covering, and do not relieve them, WE HAVE NO FAIR CLAIM TO THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS."[25]

As sympathy morphed slowly from an abstract language of emotional or imaginative identification with sufferers to a call for concrete action to relieve suffering, sympathy sharpened divisions over slavery. Nearly everyone agreed that sympathy should translate into relief of suffering, but what should that relief mean in practice? Translating sympathy into action rapidly grew divisive. A small abolitionist movement coalesced in the 1830s, aiming to inspire sympathy for slaves and moral revulsion at slavery. Sympathy had unequivocal implications for this movement: opposition to slavery and its cruelty. Sympathy separated humane individuals from moral monsters and abolitionists from slaveholders. By claiming a monopoly on sympathy, abolitionists transformed sympathy from an abstract demand for compassion into a sharply honed moral weapon. Yet sympathy's prominence in moral discourse had long depended on the flexibility and vagueness of its concrete demands; that same flexibility obscured the tensions and ambivalence in Americans' understanding of sympathy.

Americans used sympathy to draw clear lines between moral and immoral people. Antislavery writers used sympathy to distinguish humane proponents of emancipation from the supporters of cruelty, and such writers increasingly stressed that it was impossible for a genuinely humane person to persist in

owning slaves. Activists disagreed over whether they should denounce slaveholders as moral monsters or appeal to their latent sympathies; the tension between the two approaches persisted for decades. Critics of slavery debated, "Has the slave-holder a heart?"[26] Yet, whether they denounced slaveholders as cruel moral monsters or hoped to waken owners' suppressed sympathies, they insisted that emancipation was the true test of humaneness. If sympathetic souls fell into slaveholding through marriage or inheritance, the choice was simple: emancipate their slaves and rejoin the ranks of the humane, or continue to hold slaves and gradually become cruel monsters.

Over the course of the 1830s the most strident critics of slavery increasingly insisted that any participation in slavery dried up the last drop of sympathy—and all morality. Harsh denunciations of gradualism rested, in part, on an assumption that cruelty corrupted slaveholders' moral characters, undermining their moral formation and capacity for moral action. For decades moralists had insisted that moral formation rested on the exercising of sympathy. Those who lacked sympathy verged on moral bankruptcy. The cruelties of slavery stunted the growth of sympathy in slaveholders, their families, and the entire southern society.

Slavery's critics hoped to reform white Americans' morality—and purge America of slavery—by reviving Americans' sympathy and reshaping their reactions to the cruelty of slavery and the sufferings of slaves. Antislavery writers thus made training children—and retraining adults—in sympathy a key part of their agenda for converting the nation. Writers penned numerous children's books, stories, and poems to form sympathetic and moral children. In such works writers treated slaveholding as a failure in sympathy and moral formation.

In the hands of abolitionists, sympathy blended the sentimental and the gruesome. Blood, not simply tears, gushed through antebellum rhetoric; images and descriptions of cruelty played a critical role in this strategy. Antislavery writers tried to form sympathetic children by educating them about the grisly horrors of slavery.[27] Rather than protecting children from the ugliness of cruelty, antislavery writers described cruelties in detail. Children learned about a man who "was pounded with a board full of holes, till his flesh came off" and the wicked Mrs. Lalaurie of New Orleans, who chained slaves in her garret—and refused to free them when her house caught fire.[28] An image in the children's section of the *Anti-Slavery Almanac* showed a mother holding an axe over her children; she hacked the children to death

rather than see them sold away to endure "stripes and misery."[29] The *Slave's Friend*, a small magazine for children, printed pictures of fetters and whips.[30] The pictures fired at least one youthful imagination: one child colored in the picture of the whip, complete with a blood-red spot.[31] Impressing the evil of slavery upon young minds entailed establishing its cruelty in grisly detail.

The reliance on images and descriptions of cruelty grew out of a belief that such depictions sparked sympathy and encouraged morality. Many Americans believed that images of physical suffering, used in the right context, inspired morality and benevolence. Theodore Dwight Weld praised Angelina Grimké Weld for showing their son Charley images of the Middle Passage. The way to cultivate compassion and sympathy in children, he added, "is to show them *suffering objects*."[32] Antislavery parents took pride in the tears their progeny spilled over the *Slave's Friend* and "tales of woe."[33] Slave pain, as one author argued, exercised "a moral and spiritual influence all over the world, breaking down every unnatural restraint, and calling forth the simplest and deepest of all human emotions, the feeling of man for his fellow man."[34] This position was hardly eccentric. Francis Wayland's popular moral philosophy textbook argued that many virtues developed only in response to others' miseries.[35]

Yet antislavery writers also recognized that descriptions of cruelties might desensitize, even titillate, spectators. Activists often (and increasingly) assumed that slaveholders took fiendish joy in seeing slaves suffer. Despite abolitionists' suspicions of the desensitizing effects of observing cruelty, activists confidently believed that viewing pain and feeling sympathy for suffering made *them* moral people.[36] They never fully resolved this contradiction, but activists recognized the need to monitor people's reactions to ensure that depictions of cruelty provoked pity for victims—not excitement, pleasure, or callousness. Antislavery polemicists thus stressed the moral development of others, especially children, by training them in the proper reaction to pain: sympathy. Sympathy, they assumed, meant opposition to slavery.

Teaching children the wrongs of slavery required instructing them in sympathy more broadly. Children should sympathize not only with the sufferings of enslaved people but also with the pain of animals.[37] Inflicting pain on any creature, the *Slave's Friend* warned, wreaked devastation on children's characters. As in Hogarth's engravings *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, cruel children grew into moral monsters. Young John "would throw stones at the doves, run after the cows and whip them, and sometimes kill the chickens. A

gentleman saw him one day snatch up a beautiful little chicken, and pull its legs off." Childish cruelty took its toll: "What sort of a *man* do you think John became? . . . He swore, gambled, got drunk, and after a while killed himself."[38] Small cruelties mattered, even cruelty to flies or worms.[39] Children should eschew the worm-stomping "naughty crew, / Who don't care what poor worms go through." Good children, in contrast, imagined themselves as a worm-victim crushed underfoot or tormented by a giant who found "it fun to see me writhe!"[40] By not tormenting flies or dismembering chickens, children cast their lot with antislavery activists and avoided the slippery slope to slaveholding.

Antislavery writers thus expected that good moral formation would produce antislavery individuals who not only felt but also responded to the pain of others. Sympathy could not remain passive; it demanded action. But what, exactly, did that action entail—especially given the distance separating weeping readers and the suffering slaves? The *Slave's Friend* and similar works infused small, local acts with moral power: children fought slavery's cruelty in little acts, such as refusing to befriend anyone who "needlessly steps foot upon a worm."[41] Children could stop tormenting insects and butterflies and to

> Begin in little things
> To act a gentle part,
> For God will turn his love away
> From the hard and cruel heart.[42]

The very process of moral formation—and the exercising of sympathy—turned into a weapon against slavery.

Activists encouraged children and adults alike to act out sympathy for distant sufferers in their daily lives, especially in making choices about what to purchase or consume. One supporter of slavery, John P. Richardson, griped that antislavery sentiments infected everything Northerners used, down to their fashions; even stationery and handkerchiefs bore the imprint of a kneeling slave.[43] Black abolitionists and a small group of white allies took sympathetic consumption even further by avoiding products "purchased with the tears, blood, and sweat" of enslaved laborers.[44] Sympathy for sufferers meant refusing to benefit from cruelty. The *Anti-Slavery Almanac* challenged readers: "Who that remembers the slave *as bound with him*, can freely consume the product of his blood and tears, . . . or wear the cotton for which he went naked and scarred?"[45] The small act of denying oneself the slave's products

also meant sharing, in a small way, that suffering. The demand for slave-produced luxuries also encouraged cruelty, so self-denial freed consumers from complicity in cruelty. Young Margaret denied herself tasty sugar plums, since she would "want nobody beaten for me."[46] Frances's mother, likewise, taught her that by eating East Indian rice rather than Carolina rice, they would "be thinking of the poor slaves more, talk about them oftener, and perhaps lessen their dreadful sufferings."[47] One could barely separate action from sympathy; the symbolism of boycotts dwarfed any economic impact.

Sympathy also structured antislavery strategies. Antebellum activists increasingly conflated feeling the pain of slaves and fighting slavery; activism was simply active sympathy for suffering. Abolitionists—many schooled in religious revivalism—saw mass individual conversions as the key to challenging slavery's hold on the South. The American Anti-Slavery Society instructed its agents in 1833 to emphasize the "SIN OF SLAVERY, because our main hope is the consciences of men." By exposing the cruel character of slavery, agents would turn the heart of the nation against slavery.[48] Antislavery activists assumed that appealing to Americans' sympathy would not only convert slaveholders but would also create a wellspring of moral outrage at slavery. Once the antislavery convert's own sympathies were sparked, he or she ignited the flames of sympathy in others. Drawing on the strategies of evangelical revivalists, antebellum activists tried to build vast networks of sympathetic individuals who fought slavery by arousing the sympathies of others.[49] Those who could not become agents or writers channeled sympathy into fund-raising to support agents and writers. Children in Providence made pincushions, work bags, and chains of beads to raise money for books or agents; such efforts would "wipe away their [i.e., slaves'] tears."[50]

Sympathy also defined the membership of the antislavery cause—and sympathy's absence defined the opposition. Not only did slaveholders, their defenders, and apathetic Americans lack sympathy; so did critics of slavery who were insufficiently committed to the "cause of suffering humanity." In 1839 the American Anti-Slavery Society split over issues of political activism and women's roles in the movement. Abolitionists on both sides of the schism accused the other side of lacking true sympathy for slaves. The Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier chided Sarah and Angelina Grimké for persisting in their fight for gender equality at the expense of "the poor and miserable slave—sighing from the cotton plantations of the Missippi [*sic*]." Compared to the misery of the suffering slave, some "paltry grievance of our own" bore little

weight; the Grimkés' fixation on women's rights demonstrated the weakness of their sympathy for distant enslaved sufferers.[51] For Whittier, a Quaker, true Christians suffered patiently, and their own suffering mattered less than slavery's cruelty. Activists fought over the character of the movement with volleys of accusations of insensitivity to slave pain.

Sympathy served its most important purpose in drawing lines between moral antislavery forces and wicked slaveholders. Especially as the decade wore on and antislavery hopes of converting slaveholders en masse faded, opponents of slavery contrasted their own sympathy with the moral deadness of cruel slaveholders. Slavery's critics defined slaveholders (and, increasingly, the whole South) as callous and insensible to the pain of others. The "favorite amusements of slaveholders," such as dueling, "barbarous" horse racing, and cockfighting, Theodore Dwight Weld argued, "reveal a public feeling insensible to suffering, and a degree of brutality in the highest degree revolting to every noble mind." It should surprise none that people who enjoyed cockfights also viewed the "sufferings of their slaves with indifference."[52] The practice and acceptance of cruelty corrupted the moral formation of the entire culture.

As antislavery writers pitted the sympathetic North against the heartless South, slavery's defenders fumed. Proslavery whites resented depictions of cruelty and the accusation that slaveholders lacked sympathy. In 1836 James Henry Hammond, a South Carolina slaveholder and congressman, brought a handful of copies of the *Slave's Friend* to Congress, complaining that they contained "pictures calculated to excite the feelings, and to nurture the incendiary spark in the tender bosom of the child." Hammond fumed at similar publications intended for adults, with a picture on the cover of "a master flogging naked slaves" and "equally revolting" illustrations inside.[53]

Such attacks on slaveholders as cruel and unsympathetic tormentors stung because the idea that moral development relied on sympathy cut across ideological lines. Across the nation children's schoolbooks warned against cruelty to animals, and slaveholders, like their opponents, appealed to the moralizing value of kindness to animals. Hammond had learned in Robert Henry's moral philosophy class in 1824 to pity suffering animals: when killing animals for food, "we have the emotion of pity for their sufferings, w[hic]h must lead us to render their misery as short and slight as possible."[54] Rather than pitting slavery against sympathy, some defenders of slavery even argued that slavery fostered sympathy. Slaveholders should teach the slaves in their

power to sympathize with the animals in *their* power.[55] Charles Colcock Jones's catechism for slaves admonished them not to "torment horses, cows, dogs, cats, flies, or any of God's creatures."[56]

As antislavery writers defined sympathy as the core of their cause and as the moral dividing line between themselves and slaveholders, they politicized sympathy. In the attempt to monopolize the moral meaning of sympathy, activists strengthened sympathy's hold on American moral thinking. Yet the importance of sympathy in antislavery discourse also ensured that slaveholders, who inherited the same moral-philosophical legacy, would also claim sympathy. Despite antislavery activists' confidence that sympathy supported their cause, they soon found themselves under attack from proslavery activists fighting with the weapon of sympathy.

Debating Sympathy: Distance and Moral Responsibility

Despite antislavery expectations that sympathy would flow directly into antislavery action, sympathy proved an ambivalent language in practice. Sympathy meant much more than pitying suffering, but Americans often adopted the concept with little concern for philosophical precision or sensitivity to the disputes animating Scottish moral philosophers. Was sympathy an ineluctable contagion, as David Hume depicted it? Or was it a cognitive process in which imagination mediated between the sufferer and observer to dampen the free flow of passions?[57] How, precisely, did sympathy create moral responsibility? If sympathy provided the glue for society—as moral philosophers suggested—did those bonds still hold over vast distances? As long as sympathy remained a vague command for pity, such ambiguities mattered little, but the politicization of sympathy—and the demand that sympathy translate into action—exposed these fault lines. As slavery's opponents and defenders attacked each other using sympathy, they turned these long-standing ambiguities into weapons for mutually exclusive positions.

Even as Americans demanded that people pity sufferers, they divided over how to assign moral responsibility for suffering. As humaneness became crucial to morality, even the most dedicated humanitarians did not—and could not—fight to eradicate all pain. Instead, humanitarianism took aim at pain that people saw as their moral responsibility; humanitarianism thus depended on people's willingness to accept that they individually bore some responsibility for the pain of others—whether from action or inaction. Anti-

slavery humanitarianism, in particular, depended on an expanded notion of moral responsibility for distant pain.[58] As antislavery writers gazed southward, they included distant plantations in their moral spheres of influence and sympathy. Slavery's critics imagined sympathy flowing freely from north to south. Slave pain, as one antislavery author argued, exercised "a moral and spiritual influence all over the world, breaking down every unnatural restraint, and calling forth the simplest and deepest of all human emotions, the feeling of man for his fellow man."[59]

Yet, in antebellum moral theory, humanitarianism should not have worked well over distance. The mechanisms of sympathy—rooted in the visual and oriented toward concrete action—should have worked against a geographically expansive notion of sympathy and moral responsibility. Defenders of slavery rejected antislavery claims to monopolize sympathy or the moral development that grew out of it, and they counterattacked on the issue of distant sympathy. Even as their antislavery opponents imagined slave suffering breaking down geographic and even national barriers, exercising a moral influence on distant people, proslavery writers countered that distance distorted sympathy's real purpose: action. They persistently linked "distant" and "imaginary" suffering, treating antislavery sympathy as the moral equivalent of novel reading: emotionally satisfying but detached from truth or moral obligation.

One set of proslavery responses built on a common moral assumption that sympathy and benevolence should result in action rather than mere emotion. While abolitionists depicted sympathy as drying slaves' tears and breaking their chains, proslavery apologists attacked the diffuse nature of antislavery sympathy. Abolitionists, proslavery writers charged, wept sympathetic tears over accounts of slave suffering but did little to help enslaved blacks; tears did not actually bandage wounds or comfort slaves. Slavery—not emancipation—fulfilled the moral demands of sympathy by providing laborers with food, clothing, shelter, and security. Invoking the concept of active benevolence, slavery's defenders categorized abolitionists' sympathy as a false sympathy of mere emotional identification, akin to sympathizing with characters in a novel. Proslavery writers drew on widespread suspicions of sympathy that ended in emotion, not action. True benevolence, after all, "*acts,* as well as *feels*";[60] sympathy without action was simply self-absorbed. Such sympathy even trained human beings to ignore their moral duties to others and thus stymied true moral development. Imaginative sympathy was not only de-

tached from reality; it was also detached from action and true moral responsibility.

Suspicions of sympathy without action reinforced the idea that sympathy should be aimed at local sufferers, whose pains could be eased by local action. In 1834 James Henley Thornwell wrote to a friend in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that he admired "universal philanthropy." Nevertheless, Thornwell insisted, "love to the species" worked only "through the medium of circumscribed action." Such action should be channeled through the "humble duties of our social relations."[61] Proslavery writers insisted on the properly local character of sympathy and benevolent action, applied through existing hierarchies. Sympathy and benevolence operated within a limited sphere defined by geography and direct ties of responsibility. Slavery's defenders sneered that critics railed against slavery from afar, sympathizing at a distance while neglecting local, thus more morally pressing, pain.

Such arguments stirred up old debates over how distance affected sympathy and, more broadly, moral responsibility. As moral philosophers had long argued, sympathy diminished dramatically with distance; one felt the strongest sympathy for local sufferers. Sympathy should have worked best locally, but, in practice, antislavery uses of sympathy tilted strongly toward distant cruelty.[62] By the 1830s, large distances yawned between many antislavery sympathizers and suffering slaves. Northerners benefited economically from southern slavery, but gradual emancipation slowly nibbled away at the existence of slavery in the North. Antislavery critics (usually Northerners) now typically saw slavery at a distance. But suspicion of "telescopic philanthropy"—as Charles Dickens later dubbed it—spread far beyond proslavery circles.[63] Sectionalism politicized this suspicion, and proslavery writers charged that such distant sympathy was necessarily weak, limited, and misdirected.

Slavery's defenders leapt upon the inconsistency between antislavery claims to sympathy and the geographical chasms yawning between abolitionists and slaves, sneering that critics railed against slavery from afar while neglecting local, more morally pressing, pain. Proslavery writers also contrasted antislavery's distant sympathy for slaves with Northerners' supposed callousness toward the local poor. "Charity," Lucy Kenney pointedly noted, "begins at home."[64] Sympathy that benefited distant, but not local, sufferers should raise suspicions about the character of the distant philanthropists and their claims. Abolitionists' benevolence, James Henry Hammond contended in 1845, evaded the true duties of humanity. They ignored "those whose

destitute situation they can plainly see, minutely examine and efficiently relieve, to enquire after the condition of others in no way entrusted to their care, to exaggerate evils of which they cannot be cognizant, to expend all their sympathies and exhaust all their energies on those remote objects of their unnatural, not to say dangerous, benevolence."[65] Proslavery writers consistently accused antislavery forces of "false philanthropy"; slavery's critics neglected local duties to seek out sufferers in "other lands."[66] "The callous heart which coldly turns from actual misery at home," Edward Laurens noted with suspicion in 1835, "becomes suddenly warmed with the kindliest feelings towards those abroad, who suffer imaginary evils."[67] Factory workers, immigrants, free blacks, and criminals in the North deserved at least as much—or more—sympathy.[68]

Accusations that antislavery compassion operated only at a distance were particularly damning because sympathy relied heavily on the sights or sounds of suffering to create connections between tormented sufferers and sympathetic spectators. Without direct access to the physical torments within, vision allowed entrance into the feelings, whether real or imagined, of another. In Adam Smith's account sympathy worked through the imagination, but the sight of a victim's torments caused spectators to imagine themselves as the victim, seeing the situation through the victim's eyes and sharing in his or her sufferings.[69] Sympathy remained intensely visually oriented in the nineteenth century. This visual orientation was so strong that penal reformers feared that the sight of criminals suffering public punishments would induce sympathy for criminals. Since such sympathy threatened the moral clarity of punishments, reformers hid punishments behind thick prison walls.[70] Proslavery writers thus repeatedly pointed out that distant antislavery writers lacked this visual connection. James Kirke Paulding of New York had "little faith" in philanthropy when he saw it "shutting its eyes and ears to the abject and unhappy condition of people perishing at its door, and gazing with throbbing commiseration on the distant, perhaps imaginary sufferings" of faraway sufferers.[71] Proslavery polemicists invoked visual metaphors, accusing slavery's critics of "gazing" into the distance while "shutting their eyes" locally.

Distance posed serious problems for antislavery forces. Not only did they endure proslavery attacks on the quality of their sympathy, antislavery writers themselves worried that distance weakened sympathy. Distance, as one British activist complained in 1843, fostered complacency: slavery's "distance leaves us ignorant of the horrible features of its reality" and made it difficult

to reach the "nation's heart."[72] Despite their distance from enslaved laborers, however, slavery's critics saw their own sympathy as stronger and more effective than that of slaveholders. British and American activists thus developed several strategies to defuse proslavery claims. They used graphic, harrowing depictions of slave pain to compensate for the lack of direct, personal sight of suffering. The explosion of print and visual culture allowed slavery's critics to re-create the immediacy of both slave suffering and the corresponding obligation to relieve it. Engravings of scenes of cruelty provided a visual trigger for sympathy. As proslavery writers consistently linked "distant" and "imaginary" suffering, antislavery polemicists countered with concrete, detailed, and specific instances of cruelty to prove their points.

Antislavery writers learned to dwell on the sensual details of cruelty to recreate the immediacy lost to distance. They conjured up images to make readers see and feel the tough and bloody rifts in the skin, smell the fetid flesh on a mangled back, and hear the piercing shrieks of anguish. Angelina Grimké Weld described gashes deep enough that she "might have laid my whole finger in them." Slaveholders, she explained, banished whipped laborers from the house because slaveholders could not bear to smell the "putrid flesh of their lacerated backs."[73] Activists supported accusations of cruelty with eyewitness accounts or advertisements for runaways that described visible marks of abuse.[74] George Bourne described the back of Jack, a former slave: "it appeared in furrows like a ploughed field, and the whole equally unimpressible and hard."[75] Even over distance, slavery's critics brought the sights of slavery into view.

Antislavery writers also turned the tables. Paradoxically, although distance could weaken sympathy, distance protected critics from moral blindness; slaveholders' proximity to slave suffering bred cruelty, not sympathy. The sight of a victim's pain sparked sympathy, but the sight of cruelty also desensitized those constantly exposed to it; proximity to cruelty "spreads corruption."[76] Sympathy was natural to human beings, but human beings could not count on an endless natural supply. As antislavery writers grew ever more furious at proslavery claims, they warned that overexposure to suffering would wring the heart of its last drop of sympathy. The "hardening nature of such scenes" turned tenderhearted souls into remorseless fiends.[77] Theodore Dwight Weld argued that it was human nature "for the heart to become by habit, not only totally insensible to certain forms of cruelty, but even to find its chief amusement in such cruelties, till utterly intoxicated by their stimulation." He ex-

plained, "It is the *novelty* of cruelty, rather than the *degree*, which repels most minds."[78] Antebellum moral philosophy backed him up. Francis Wayland reminded his readers that frequently viewing any vicious act blunted an individual's feeling of repugnance; quoting Alexander Pope, he warned that "we first endure, then pity, then embrace."[79] Warnings against habituation to the sights of sin, but cruelty in particular, pervaded antebellum rhetoric, especially antislavery rhetoric. Slaveholders easily became inured to the cruelty surrounding them. Sympathy could not be taken for granted.

By the late 1830s sympathy and cruelty were deeply politicized. Americans increasingly tended to view sympathy's meaning as both clear and univocal, even as they grew less likely to share a common understanding of that meaning. As moralists demanded that sympathy translate into action, they fueled a debate that went far beyond moral-philosophical abstractions. Despite abolitionist claims to monopolize sympathy, defenders of slavery responded by establishing their own claims to sympathetic action, even defining slaveholding as an exercise in humaneness and practical benevolence.

Benevolent Slaveholding

By the 1830s slaveholders had built a substantial constituency of whites who believed that slavery, not abolition, represented true humanity. Slaveholders, they claimed, stood in a far better position than did abolitionists to fill the demands for active, practical benevolence. Rather than merely calling for humane slaveholders to ameliorate slavery, polemicists described slaveholding itself as an exercise in true benevolence. The claim that slavery was benevolent in itself would have seemed far-fetched in the eighteenth century, but the notion gained increasing plausibility among whites in the 1830s. Defenders of slavery built on suspicions (nurtured by colonization) that emancipation was, at best, a half-blessing, and as polemicists increasingly framed the slavery debate as a choice between slavery and abolition, many whites cast their lot with slavery. As humaneness grew more important in American moral thinking, a new breed of defenders of slavery made humaneness a central part of their arguments. Proslavery arguments do not reflect how slaveholders *actually* treated enslaved blacks. Yet, the growing moral importance of humaneness forced slaveholders to alter the ways that they understood and defended slavery, both to the world and to themselves.[80]

As moralists demanded practical benevolence, proslavery reformers rede-

fined slavery, in its ideal form, as a benevolent, humane enterprise; reformers produced a vast prescriptive literature listing the duties of owners to slaves and laying out the humane treatment of enslaved laborers.[81] Charles Colcock Jones, a former colonizationist and moderate critic of slavery, threw his lot behind slavery's reform in the 1830s.[82] Jones, a Princeton-educated slaveholder, built his reputation evangelizing slaves and advising slaveholders on their duties; he called owners to "be kind and condescending."[83] Jones and other reformers laid out slaveholders' responsibilities, including giving enough food, clothing, and medical care. Writers warned against overworking enslaved laborers or giving them too little time for rest. The ideal slaveholder humanely consulted the needs—and even feelings—of slaves. George W. Freeman, a North Carolina minister, similarly urged slaveholders to "do every thing in their power to make their [slaves'] situation comfortable, and to put forth all reasonable efforts to render them contented and happy."[84]

Such advice departed significantly from eighteenth-century assumptions that slaves lived miserable lives and desired freedom. By the 1830s proslavery writers and slaveholders routinely depicted slaveholders as humane protectors of enslaved blacks. Freeman exhorted slaveholders to show slaves that "if they have a *fast friend on earth, that one is their master, or their mistress.*"[85] Reformers no longer described humaneness as improving an unhappy condition, nor did humaneness mean evangelizing slaves so that they would find relief from their suffering in heaven. In the 1750s Thomas Bacon had called for religious instruction to ensure "that these poor People may *receive* their *good Things* in Heaven, since it is plain they cannot enjoy them upon Earth."[86] Now, advice literature assumed that enslaved blacks could and should enjoy good things on earth.

Calls for benevolence served dual purposes. By idealizing the owner-slave relationship as one of friendship and benevolent protection, writers demanded reform of the many slaveholders whose behavior fell short of such ideals. Writers sought to reform slavery into a benevolent institution that filled modern moral demands for humaneness, and they scolded slaveholders for failing to meet those standards. Thomas Clay chided owners for "often" neglecting to provide enough food, thus prompting slaves to steal, or failing to provide enough warm clothing at the right time (November in Georgia), giving slaves the perfect excuse to skip church. Clay, who focused on the "moral improvement" of slaves, had no doubt that slaveholders neglected even the simplest of duties.[87]

Those same calls for reform, however, also advanced the idea that slavery could be fundamentally benevolent. Reform campaigns thus contributed to proslavery rhetoric by constructing a humane slavery defendable by nineteenth-century standards, even if slavery looked far different in practice. The point was no longer that benevolence softened a cruel institution; instead, cruelty betrayed a humane institution. Slaveholders defended their institution on the basis of these ideals, treating any cases of cruelty as exceptions, as illegitimate "abuses" of an otherwise benevolent and humane institution. When George Freeman argued that humanity, justice, reputation, and self-interest dictated treating slaves well, he encouraged the idea that humanity, interest, and reputation did, in actuality, protect enslaved blacks.[88] Slaveholders who followed the recommendations could assure themselves that, by showing "condescension, kindness and good will," they gave their slaves what is "just and equal."[89] The claims of reformers echoed in the rhetoric of proslavery polemicists. In 1836 James Henry Hammond, a congressman from South Carolina, argued that "there is not a happier, more contented race upon the face of the earth."[90]

The public language of reform both reflected and shaped slaveholders' private beliefs in their own benevolence. Slaveholders privately echoed these claims of benevolence, describing slaves as "contented," and slaveholders exalted their own roles in making slaves happy. One slaveholder imagined that his mother's enslaved workers would rejoice at seeing "guardians and protectors" return safely after a trip.[91] George Freeman, in the advice literature, insisted that slaveholders were "seldom disappointed" in their expectations of fidelity.[92]

In keeping with advice literature, slaveholders claimed deep solicitude for their slaves' emotional and physical well-being, and descriptions of enslaved people's health found their way into diaries and letters. Certainly, slaveholders stood to lose financially when their human property fell ill or died.[93] Yet proponents of slavery saw little conflict between benevolence and self-interest; they even argued that self-interest served benevolence. Broader cultural expectations of humaneness—and slaveholders' own desire to understand themselves as humane—encouraged slaveholders to frame even self-interested concerns about sick or dying slaves in emotional language. Whether they did so sincerely or not, numerous owners cast their losses as personal as well as financial.[94] Owners penned eulogies to dead slaves or recorded detailed—and emotional—accounts of their illnesses. One woman spent over a

full page in a letter describing the death of "poor old Kesia," reporting that Kesia's children "will plant flowers about her grave and water them with their tears."[95] When one of John Palfrey's slaves, "good old Amy," died suddenly, the Louisianan lamented that her death "cast a gloom" and "every one seems dispirited."[96] Slaveholders claimed concern for slaves' happiness and feelings. One owner sought financial help to purchase an enslaved woman's daughter to prevent their separation. He explained that enslaved blacks "have feelings . . . and it is my earnest desire to gratify them."[97] Perhaps he had read George Freeman's reminder that slaves' "delicate and sensitive" feelings "demand to be respected."[98]

Slaveholders' self-perceptions of humaneness also shaped their view of discipline. Humanizing the institution, reformers insisted, did not mean ending bodily punishments; rather, humane owners punished only when "necessary." In keeping with the advice literature, many slaveholders privately claimed reluctance to whip slaves. But some slaves deserved whippings. Punishment, as James Henry Hammond saw it, was a painful duty. When he first acquired slaves, he explained, they were "in very bad subjection." The necessary "severity," Hammond griped, "cost me infinite pain & gained a name which I detest of all others."[99] Slaveholders portrayed themselves as punishing slaves only reluctantly, only as a last resort, and only because the slaves greatly deserved it—and, frequently, with less severity than truly deserved. John Palfrey of Louisiana gave a runaway "a small whipping [although] he richly deserved a severe one."[100]

In this view necessary punishments did not count as cruelty; instead, punishments aligned with the moral order of nature, which visited pain on wrongdoers. God used pain to warn human beings about not only physical dangers but also moral dangers. In a world in which pain naturally followed vice, "crimes" could not go unpunished. Indeed, pain saved miscreants from greater future pain. In a proper educative context, inflicting limited pain was not cruelty; it protected enslaved blacks from worse consequences. God's eternal law, Thomas Clay explained, linked crime and punishments. Slaveholders' punishments must partake in that same purpose. Any sign of passion from a punisher would "diminish his [the slave's] sense of guilt" and the corresponding value of the punishment; passion turned a lesson into cruelty.[101]

The desire of many slaveholders to appear benevolent, whether to themselves or to others, fit neatly with their attempts to systematize and modernize plantation discipline. In an 1832 plantation record book James Henry

Hammond sternly instructed his overseers to flog slaves "as seldom as possible yet always when necessary," the same phrase that appeared in an 1840 plantation diary from Mississippi.[102] Nor should overseers resort to "unusual" punishments. Hammond gave some clue of his meaning when he wrote, "the highest punishment *must not* exceed ~~one hundred~~ Fifty lashes in one day."[103] Hammond and his Mississippi echo, Andrew Flinn, listed punishable offenses, in descending order of severity, ranging from running away to untidiness.[104] By creating rules for plantation governance—regardless of how the rules were followed—slaveholders assured themselves that their plantations were established on principles of humanity.

Few slaveholders denied that slavery included the potential for genuine cruelty. Yet rather than raising questions about slavery, that potential reinforced slaveholders' perceptions of their own benevolence. They persistently defined cruelty as an *abuse* of an otherwise humane institution: cruelty was a matter of individual wrongdoing, not a widespread or systemic problem. Indeed, slaveholders salved their consciences about humaneness by comparing themselves with inhumane masters. When one slaveholding South Carolinian died, his enslaved laborers were sold. A neighbor reported sadly to his wife that "in days past they have had meat & milk and every comfort; they have taken their last meat; Sam[ue]l Boykin bot them."[105] Most slave owners could find a Samuel Boykin to assure themselves of their own humanity. Another South Carolinian cautioned a relative against hiring out slaves, even though the locals were "more civilized & humanized" than Alabamians. His caution did not extend to slavery itself; in the same letter he recommended a proslavery argument to his correspondent.[106]

Private assertions of personal benevolence mirrored public defenses of slavery. By the 1830s supporters of slavery across the intellectual spectrum felt the need to justify slavery as humane to a society revolted by cruelty. Even polemicists who harbored suspicions that Americans had grown too squeamish about pain felt compelled to weigh in. Morality, William Harper explained in his influential *Memoir on Slavery* (1837), depended on the "greater good" served by an action, and slave pain served that greater good by advancing the progress of civilization. Yet even Harper paid homage to new humanitarian ideals; he reflected that "*happiness* is the great end of existence." If the greater good rested on a certain amount of pain for some, the greater good still must benefit the sufferers. Even animals destined for dinner plates must benefit from their pain; they were owed kind treatment during life. Enslaved

blacks, likewise, did not benefit from slavery as much as whites did, but slaves still benefited. The slave trade granted the "boon of existence to millions and millions" and better "enjoyment of their existence."[107] Whatever his scruples concerning American squeamishness about pain, Harper joined the chorus of those who denied slavery's cruelty.

Polemicists joined reformers in defining cruelty as an abuse of a humane institution. Slavery did not sanction cruelty; it even discouraged it. Abuse was rare, because both self-interest and the humaneness of human nature militated against it. "Enlightened selfishness," as a New Orleans minister claimed, assured "just and humane" treatment.[108] The rare slaveholder who abused slaves lost their labor. Ownership, William Harper argued, forged bonds of affection and kindness, because a person naturally felt "attached to that which is *his own*." Dependency only strengthened that attachment.[109] Self-interest aside, Harper insisted, few human beings "delight in witnessing pain."[110]

Antebellum defenders not only denied charges of personal cruelty; they also justified slavery on the grounds of its humaneness. Such arguments gathered considerable steam in the 1830s. In 1836 James Kirke Paulding argued that the morality of an action could be determined by its tendency "to promote or diminish the happiness" of those affected.[111] Paulding defended slavery in precisely those terms. Emancipation was a "presumptuous anticipation that the miseries they [emancipationists] may inflict on the living, will be repaid by the happiness of those yet unborn."[112] Slavery would secure the greatest happiness for all Americans, including blacks.

Not only was slavery not cruel, but the vulnerability of African Americans to pain also legitimated the slaveholder's benevolent intervention. Slaveholders saved blacks from untold misery, since blacks would perish without white aid. Emancipation would thus be "cruel and inhuman."[113] Because blacks were "susceptible of pain," Lucy Kenney argued, "in the wise dispensation of Providence, we are the disposers of their destiny."[114] Proslavery writers increasingly depicted slaveholders as protectors of slaves' happiness, securing their health, sustenance, and even comfort. Slaveholders even protected the psychological health of enslaved blacks by sparing them anxiety about the future. Slaves, the South Carolinian Whitemarsh Seabrook argued, faced death "free from those thousand anxieties, which beset the mind of the free man, who leaves his children without protection." They even died with the comfort of knowing they left their children in the protections of slavery.[115]

By the 1830s, proslavery rhetoric relied heavily on the argument that slavery was more humane than freedom. Such claims normalized slaves' suffering. If enslaved blacks endured pain, those pains were neither the effect of slavery nor unique to slavery; they were instead the typical sufferings of life. The point was not usually to deny that slaves ever suffered; the point was that they suffered *less* than they would in freedom. In 1828 Zephaniah Kingsley, a slaveholder in Georgia, published *A Treatise on the Patriarchal, or Co-operative System of Society* (reprinted in 1829, 1833, and 1834). He argued that "the idea of slavery, when associated with cruelty and injustice, is revolting to every philanthropic mind; but when the idea is associated with justice and benevolence, slavery, so called, easily amalgamates with the ordinary conditions of life."[116]

Slavery might even be better than the "ordinary conditions of life." While some defenders of slavery equated the sufferings of slaves with those of the poor, a vocal, growing group of polemicists insisted that slavery *protected* blacks from the typical pains of poverty. Such activists attacked northern free labor as cruel. In contrast, slavery grounded a modern, organic society bound together by a harmony of interests. For some polemicists the point was an economic critique of free labor; for others, however, economic and cultural criticisms of free labor simply provided a convenient way to claim humaneness for slavery.[117] Far from creating misery, slavery saved blacks from poverty by providing consistent employment in hard times. Slavery shifted economic burdens from workers to employers, since slaveholders, unlike free-labor employers, could not hire only those in their "health and vigor."[118] Slavery was *more* humane than the alternatives.

As slavery's defenders increasingly depicted slaveholders as humane protectors of African Americans, polemicists abandoned eighteenth-century assumptions that enslaved blacks longed for freedom.[119] As late as 1832, in the wake of Nat Turner's insurrection, James M'Dowell argued in the Virginia House of Delegates that enslaved people naturally (and rightfully) desired liberty. They did so regardless of the kindness of their masters: the slave was no "victim of cruelty"; there was no peasantry "who suffer less from want—who suffer less from hardship—who struggle less under the toils of life or who have a fuller supply of the [physical] comforts" of life. But owners' humaneness, M'Dowell insisted, did not alter the bitterness of slavery; instead, humaneness only tantalized the enslaved laborer with a taste of a better life and could only "inflame his discontent."[120] In the early 1830s,

however, claims for the humaneness of slaveholders yielded to claims that slavery itself made blacks happy and contented. After 1832, proslavery writers rarely admitted publicly that a desire for liberty beat in the breasts of enslaved blacks. Any desire for freedom could be explained by the meddling of outside agitators who operated on the "credulous" minds of slaves; runaways, once disabused of false images of freedom, would eagerly return.[121] Talk of insurrection, so common in previous decades, did not disappear, but in proslavery rhetoric it hid behind the insistence that slaves lived happy, pleasant, and carefree lives.

"Facts and Testimonies Are Troops, Weapons and Victory"

Proslavery denials of cruelty and claims of humaneness deeply frustrated antislavery forces. Slavery's critics were reluctant to define the wrong of slavery solely in terms of the cruelty inflicted on the bodies of slaves, but the need to counter proslavery claims weighed heavily. To refute assertions that slavery was benevolent, antislavery writers insisted on the opposite: that slavery was bloodthirsty and cruel. As the 1830s progressed, proslavery claims of benevolence fueled antislavery charges of gross cruelty. Proslavery counterattacks eroded any semblance of cultural agreement on the self-evident cruelty of slavery, setting into motion a battle between competing and contradictory narratives. These competing narratives—and the anecdotal evidence used to support them—increasingly took on a life of their own, as both sides struggled to assert their own authority before audiences that often had only limited contact with slavery itself.

During the 1830s antislavery writers crammed their literature with grisly details of cruelty, often with accompanying illustrations. As one Southerner complained, readers found "stories of oppressions & cruelties most horrible" and "pictures & prints of the most revolting & brutal barbarities."[122] He did not exaggerate. George Bourne recounted a story of a farmer who tied an enslaved man to a log, whipping him until his "back was one entire mass of blood and flesh cut up in pieces, which were commingled and slowly amalgamating together." Such cruelty did not suffice. The "citizen-flayer" fastened a cat to the man's back; as it tried "to get loose, the cat's talons continually tore the slave's already gory back, until the villain's vengeance was glutted." The farmer treated the enslaved man's wounds with "*salt, pepper, vinegar,* &c." to increase the pain and then ordered "the son of anguish" back to work.[123]

Grisly details matched gory pictures. Were the story not enough to sicken readers, Bourne printed an illustration, which reappeared in a children's book in the 1840s.[124] In it the farmer, improbably well-dressed in a suit and top hat, brandished a whip over a naked man as the cat shredded his skin. The presence of the whip (virtually omnipresent in antislavery imagery, hovering in the air over slave bodies) highlighted the slaveholder's agency; he deliberately inflicted pain on the enslaved man. The juxtaposition of the whipping and the cat (which were chronologically distinct in the story) suggested the bestial character of the slaveholder, despite his civilized garb, just as the use of the term *glutted* evoked beasts gorging on prey. Cats, who enjoyed tormenting their prey, were already strongly associated with cruelty itself.[125] Likewise, the "cat" was a nickname for the cat-o'-nine-tails whip; elsewhere, activists who described a cat being "dragged" down someone's back often meant the whip, not the animal, but the nickname reinforced associations of slaveholders with bestial cruelty.[126]

Grisly details and images of cruelty quickly became antislavery staples. Cruelty was no mere abuse of a benevolent institution; it lay at the heart of slavery. Many writers now pinned their indictments of the institution on its excessive cruelty. George Bourne insisted that slavery's "horrors may be mitigated, but its uniform and essential predominating quality is blood, *human blood!*"[127] David Lee Child was sure that "hundreds of *cartwhips* and *cowskins,* instruments which I am told make the skin fly like feathers, and cut frequently to the bone, are in *perpetual daily motion* in the slave States."[128]

Yet the choice to refute proslavery claims by escalating antislavery rhetoric about cruelty posed challenges. Despite antislavery activists' conviction that cruelty was a daily, dominant feature of the institution, they faced difficulties in convincing others. These difficulties only multiplied when slavery's defenders claimed that locals understood slavery better than distant critics did, and locals denied that such cruelty existed. In response slavery's foes sedulously collected information from any available source, especially southern ones. David Lee Child boasted that he would "prove every thing by law, or by the *absence* of law, and by actual occurrences."[129] Laws against cruelties proved the necessity of such laws; the lack of a law showed the acceptance of cruelty. Newspapers, too, indicted southern cruelty. By reading southern newspapers, antislavery investigators learned of Mme. Lalaurie of New Orleans, who chained slaves, covered with wounds and sores, in her attic; the scandal made it into local papers in 1834 when her house caught fire.[130]

Torturing American Citizens. As cruelty played a growing role in antislavery arguments, activists used gruesome images—such as this 1834 engraving of a slaveholder tying a cat to the back of an enslaved man—to provoke horror at slaveholders' cruelty. The image contrasts the ostensibly civilized status of the slaveholder with his animalistic cruelty. From George Bourne, *Picture of Slavery* (1834); repr. in Jonathan Walker, *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth* [1845?]. Courtesy of Brown University Library.

Activists turned the words of slaveholders against them; runaway notices provided descriptions of scars and wounds that slaveholders had inflicted.[131] Runaways themselves directly refuted slaveholders' claims of kindness. In 1838 the narrative of the runaway Moses Roper gave detailed accounts of tortures, complete with illustrations of implements. Roper told readers that

he had once been whipped five hundred times; his scars provided "a standing testimony."[132]

Yet source problems loomed large in antislavery writers' battle for authority, and they tried to persuade others that these reported details were just the tip of the iceberg. Slaveholders, activists charged, practiced their cruelty in secret and deliberately hid it from strangers.[133] Cyrus Pitt Grosvenor told his antislavery audience in Salem in 1834 that Charleston's slaves received their punishments in jail, which explained why "so little whipping is *seen* or *heard* by transient visitors."[134] In New York James A. Thome, a native of Kentucky, cautioned Northerners not to be deceived by appearances: "*These sufferings still exist*, and despite the efforts of their cruel authors to hush them down," they would be revealed.[135]

By the early 1830s antislavery activists were keenly aware of the political value of "facts," by which they typically meant concrete and verifiable instances of cruelty. The American Anti-Slavery Society instructed its agents to seek "FACTS, for they chiefly influence reflecting minds." Such facts must be "well authenticated" and "state[d] with the precision of a witness under oath."[136] The New York editor Samuel E. Cornish promised that his new African American newspaper, "a journal of facts and of instruction," would "tell tales of woe" that would "make the heart to bleed and the ear to burn."[137] Antislavery writers collected these facts, confident that "information bears down all before it."[138]

Yet for all their love of facts, many polemicists worried about their focus on individual instances of cruelty and preferred to make arguments based on the "system." In 1823 the British abolitionist William Wilberforce had argued that focusing on extreme cases of cruelty insidiously habituated people to the system itself; that focus distracted people from the systemic dangers of unlimited power and from the actual conditions endured by most slaves.[139] Few Americans initially seemed attuned to Wilberforce's worry, but similar concerns surfaced in America in the 1830s. William Ellery Channing insisted that universal human experience offered a more reliable guide than did discrete details; a "superficial observer" might fail to grasp the problem. It was "much safer," he explained, "to argue from the principles of human nature, than from insulated facts."[140]

Part of polemicists' hesitation lay in doubts about whether the physical pain was, indeed, the worst evil of slavery, but strategic concerns also loomed large. As polemicists attacked the fiendish cruelty of slavery—and argued that

cruelty destroyed moral formation—they implied that slaveholders were, in fact, fiends. "Slavery and cruelty," George Bourne argued, "cannot be disjoined; consequently every slaveholder necessarily must be inhuman."[141] Certainly many abolitionists agreed. But harsh denunciations of slaveholders posed difficulties; many white Americans doubted that slaveholders were really, as a group, the moral monsters portrayed by abolitionists. Even many critics of slavery doubted Bourne's claim. William Ellery Channing criticized abolitionists for their bitter attacks on slaveholders' characters rather than on the effects of slavery on the enslaved person.[142]

Other antislavery activists clung to the possibility of a humane slaveholder who did not torture slaves—and who might be ripe for conversion. A children's book in 1837 portrayed a man who gradually awakened to the injustice of slavery itself. It had never occurred to him, the story explained, to free his own slaves simply because other slaveholders were cruel.[143] How could activists convince such people that slavery was wrong and inhumane? Focusing on individual instances of cruelty might appease the consciences of "humane" slaveholders, who could assure themselves that they engaged in no such cruelty. Alternatively, focusing on slaveholders' villainy might enrage self-styled humane slaveholders into defensiveness and make them less likely to convert.

Strategically, many polemicists preferred to focus on systemic problems rather than individual cruelties. First, highlighting systemic evils extended antislavery criticisms of slavery to all participants, humane or cruel. It allowed slavery's critics to argue that even humane slaveholders participated in a cruel system. Antislavery Pennsylvanians pointed out that humane masters, by declining to free their slaves, left enslaved people at risk of falling into crueler hands when owners died. Second, slavery's critics argued that participation in a cruel system undermined moral development; the nature of slavery itself led to cruelty, regardless of individual intentions. Countless northern ministers deadened their consciences with promises to treat slaves well.[144] "Absolute power," some predicted, destroyed benevolence.[145]

Focusing on individual instances of cruelty, likewise, left activists open to charges of exaggeration. Proslavery writers admitted that a few cases of extreme cruelty existed, but they insisted that rare and isolated cases could not represent the system as a whole. Indeed, slavery's defenders defined such cases as *abuses* of a humane institution. By the 1820s a self-proclaimed critic of slavery, Reuben Legett, joined a host of visitors to the South who reported

that they had expected to meet "cruelty & wretchedness at every step." Instead he found kind owners and "contented" slaves.[146] Proslavery polemicists leaped on such points. Theodore Clapp, a Unitarian minister in New Orleans, claimed in 1838 that nearly every antislavery argument he had read in the previous two decades focused on "the abuse" of slavery. Abuses existed, he admitted, but "rare and detached instances" were irrelevant to the moral standing of the institution. Fathers, husbands, and teachers similarly abused their power over children, wives, and students, but families and schools remained valuable institutions.[147] Proslavery writers denied that slavery was a fundamentally abusive institution. Trotting out specific anecdotes to prove that cruelties existed did little to convert people who assumed that such cases were exceptions. Antislavery writers likewise faced charges of fabricating those accounts. James Kirke Paulding insisted that "the disgusting prints of the abolitionists are mere fancy pieces."[148]

Yet, despite doubts and concerns about the strategy, the antislavery activists of the 1830s found the promise of proving slavery's inhumanity too compelling to resist. Questions of whether they should focus on cruelty gave way, by the late 1830s, to questions of how to prove that cruelty. In 1838 Theodore Dwight Weld, an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society, began soliciting evidence to refute the "the main objections to abolition sentiments" with "facts and testimony." The first tract promised to detail slaves' poor food, clothing, and shelter. It would prove "that barbarous cruelties are inflicted upon them, such as terrible lacerations with the whip and paddle, fastening upon them iron collars, yokes, chains, horns and bells, branding them with hot irons, knocking out their teeth, maiming and killing them."[149] Weld crammed the pages of the resulting book, *American Slavery as It Is* (1839), with gory descriptions, creating a bloody catalogue of cruelty. One sympathetic reader wrote to Weld: "I have waded through the blood and gore of 'Slavery as it is' and have just come out on the other side, all dripping, *dripping*."[150] The book, which focused narrowly on the physical effects of slavery, made the details of physical cruelty central to the assault on slavery.

Yet Weld's choice of strategies was not obvious; he previously had self-consciously avoided the tactic of recounting details of cruelty. Two years earlier, he had publicly discounted relying on "*instances of cruelty*," warning that audiences might scoff at such examples as anomalies or even charge agents with fabrication. But such reactions were not the real problem. The real danger was that focusing on specific "instances of cruelty" would "turn

the public mind from the crowning horror of slavery, to a mere incidental. Treatment, however bad, is but an appendage of slavery." Slavery's true horror lay in "its death-stab into the soul of the slave." To demonstrate cruelty, Weld argued, activists should invoke the "philosophy of arbitrary power," the tendency of human beings to abuse power and the interests of slaveholders to do it.[151] Weld, like others, began by emphasizing the systemic wrongs and dehumanization of slavery, but he increasingly focused on detailed examples to prove the reality and ubiquity of cruelty. Perhaps by late 1838 Weld realized that the proslavery argument had become too persuasive and that it must be countered directly.

Pain moved to the center of Weld's public analysis of slavery, and his book reinforced and expanded the central role of pain in antislavery rhetoric and strategies. In *American Slavery as It Is* Weld did not retreat from the claim that one could easily infer slavery's cruelty by examining human nature and history; however, his concern that treatment was just "an appendage of slavery" got buried under an avalanche of details. Cruelty, Weld argued, was central to slavery. "The slave's *susceptibility of pain*" alone moved the enslaved laborer: "In this [pain] it [slavery] plants all its stings; here it sinks its hot irons; cuts its deep gashes; flings its burning embers, and dashes its boiling brine and liquid fire: into this it strikes its cold flesh hooks, grapgling [*sic*] irons, and instruments of nameless torture; and by it drags him shrieking to the end of his pilgrimage."[152] Despite Weld's qualms, the project of defeating slaveholders' claims to humanity by cataloguing their cruelties proved too enticing. "The old falsehood," Weld reminded his readers, "that the slave is *kindly treated,* shallow and stupid as it is, has lullabied to sleep four-fifths of the free north and west."[153]

The project awakened at least the antislavery community and swept aside its doubts. Two enthusiastic Ohioans predicted that Weld would have to trim the "merely *horrid*" facts from his collection to make enough room for the "absolutely *diabolical.*" The Ohioans looked even more enthusiastically to the results: "the channels are now open thro' which publick sympathy may flow and bear salvation to the captive."[154] When Lydia Maria Child sent her evidence, she suggested that Weld also collect "instruments of torture."[155] The book became an antislavery hit, selling more than one hundred thousand copies within a year.[156] In August of 1839 Angelina Grimké Weld gleefully wondered how the South could respond: "The testimonies to her cruelty are so overwhelming and appear to be so incontrovertible, that we cannot imag-

ine how she will defend herself against such bloody accusations."[157] By October, Theodore Dwight Weld gloried in a "work of incalculable value." He began soliciting more information about slaves' conditions, asking correspondents to "describe in detail the different modes, postures, instruments and forms of torture, confinement, preventives of escape, etc., and state any instances of torture witnessed by yourself or others in whom you confide." In the war against slavery, Weld urged, "facts and testimonies are troops, weapons and victory, all in one."[158] Facts would deal a deathblow to slavery. Despite Weld's initial qualms about the strategy, however, proslavery claims of humaneness made an argument based on "facts" too compelling to resist.

Categories of Pain

As polemicists invoked the language of cruelty to attack each other, they exposed fractures in Americans' understandings of the moral meanings of pain and cruelty. For both sides the debate over slavery required establishing the truth—or falsity—of antislavery accounts of cruelty. Yet that task proved difficult. Not only did the two sides disagree about the basic question of whether slavery involved great pain; they also disagreed about how to establish moral responsibility for pain and how to distinguish necessary, unavoidable pain from unnecessary cruelty. Even when both sides agreed that a specific act constituted cruelty, they fought over whether slavery encouraged or discouraged such cruelty. Cultural agreement that cruelty was a perversion of human nature intensified conflict over whether cruelty was a rare abuse of a good institution or the predictable outcome of the corrupting influences of power. The debate over whether slavery was cruel or humane expanded rapidly into a debate over the nature and shape of white responsibility for black pain.

The ability of both sides to invoke humaneness depended on competing assumptions about the nature of pain and moral responsibility for human suffering. Slaveholders and their critics both stressed physical pain—and a white responsibility to alleviate that pain. Yet the two sides used competing frameworks to describe the nature of that pain and the moral responsibility to relieve it. While abolitionists emphasized the deliberate infliction of pain, proslavery writers highlighted human agency in preventing pain. Slavery's defenders stressed the role of slaveholders in protecting slaves from pain (and anxiety about future pain) produced by natural, economic, and struc-

tural forces. Slavery, they suggested, cured the pain spawned by neglect and poverty. When proslavery writers compared the relative physical comfort of enslaved laborers with the miseries of free factory workers, slavery's defenders blamed suffering on abandoned responsibilities. Everyone, James Kirke Paulding claimed, agreed that happiness depended on freedom from "hunger, thirst, cold, and over tasked labour."[159] This focus on natural and structural suffering turned on a different view of the role of human agency in producing pain: pain resulted primarily from human inaction and neglect, not deliberate infliction. "The institution of nature," William Harper argued in 1837, created want, misery, ignorance, and vice; slavery banished "the want and the misery."[160]

While slavery's defenders assumed that human beings *could* prevent pain, they pitted human agency against the larger, systemic forces of nature and capitalism. The forces that caused pain would never disappear entirely, but human beings failed morally when they neglected a responsibility to protect others from those forces. True evil lay in sins of omission and inaction; whites sinned the most in abandoning their responsibilities to protect laborers from the pains of poverty. By shifting the ground of the debate to suffering due to physical deprivations or anxieties about future deprivations, proslavery writers remained convinced that pain revolted them at least as much as it did other Americans.

Antislavery writers, for their part, focused on deliberately inflicted pain; they stressed not only slaveholders' agency but also the malice behind that agency. Pain resulted not from the forces of nature or society but from violence. When William Ellery Channing read extracts of Theodore Dwight Weld's *American Slavery as It Is* before it was published, he praised the project but worried about the implicit, unproven assumption that the injuries "were all the effects of punishment or *intentional* infliction." Weld should prove that slaveholders commonly "*inflict* such injuries."[161] Channing's distinction was important. For slavery's critics the point was not simply that enslaved laborers suffered but that slaveholders intentionally and actively caused them pain. Factory workers' sufferings, as one antislavery writer explained, were "incidental to man's free agency," but slave pain resulted from human choice and was backed by legal sanction.[162] Abolitionists often saw the suffering of free and enslaved laborers in radically different terms, seeing the former as mere pain, not cruelty. Cruelty implied deliberate choice, not inaction.[163]

Slave pain resulted from individual sins, not natural or structural forces beyond one's control.

The distinction also mattered because many critics of slavery did not believe that pain, in itself, was necessarily evil; some pain was simply regrettable. For decades moralists had focused on the wrong of inflicting pain rather than on the right of victims to be free from pain. This indirection of moral concern about pain lingered in antebellum thought about pain. The mere existence of pain did not automatically trigger moral outrage. William Ellery Channing distinguished between the whips of slavery and the natural suffering of life. Enduring the latter served a "kindly" purpose; natural suffering called forth human powers and developed human nature, but whipping degraded enslaved sufferers.[164] Despite Americans' growing revulsion against cruelty, they did not think of pain in simple categories of good and evil. Rather, revulsion against cruelty grew alongside other, mildly positive views of the experience of suffering. Quakers had long treated the patient acceptance of suffering as a path to holiness, and a host of other Christians joined Quakers in viewing suffering as potentially beneficial. Channing instructed his congregation on the benefits of pain for building character and love of God. In Lewis Tappan's Unitarian phase, he heard one of Channing's sermons in 1818 that advised avoiding "affliction" when possible but accepting inevitable suffering as a blessing that could lead to God.[165] William Lloyd Garrison reflected that "bodily affliction is often needed to prevent our going astray."[166]

An antislavery fascination with martyrdom and a spiritual value of suffering paradoxically supported their attacks on deliberately inflicted physical pain. William Lloyd Garrison encouraged Lewis Tappan with St. Paul's declaration, "I take *pleasure* in infirmities." The pleasure lay not in the goodness of suffering but in enduring it "for Christ's sake!" After rejoicing that Tappan was "*counted worthy* to suffer," Garrison added, "the *united* suffrages of the ungodly against a moral enterprise are very strong proofs that it is a righteous one."[167] Garrison's easy elision between Tappan's suffering and righteousness is revealing. Evildoers inflicted pain on good people: willing acceptance of pain reaffirmed the morality of the sufferer. Garrison and many fellow abolitionists gloried in the idea of martyrdom; Harriet Martineau titled her 1839 history of abolitionism *The Martyr Age in the United States*.[168] When Elijah Lovejoy was shot in 1837, he was immediately dubbed a martyr. Strikingly, this interest in martyrdom rarely extended to enslaved blacks; abolitionists

thought of themselves—not slaves—as martyrs. Yet, despite this positive view of the martyr's pain, the division between moral sufferer and immoral tormentor reinforced criticisms of cruelty.

Slavery's critics countered a proslavery emphasis on natural deprivations of food or shelter by focusing on deliberately inflicted pain and tissue damage, which stemmed directly from slaveholders' intentions. Insofar as antislavery writers discussed cold or hunger, they typically did so to point to slaveholders' pain-producing agency and deliberate choice. Theodore Dwight Weld cited cases of freezing and starving slaves to prove slaveholders' callousness or malice. Slaves did not simply suffer hunger or cold; slaveholders *inflicted* that pain. Weld aimed to prove that slaveholders were cruel enough to whip slaves "until their bodies are covered *with blood and mangled flesh*" and washed with liquid salt "to add the greatest keenness to their sufferings."[169] A slaveholder who underfed enslaved blacks, Weld explained, "can habitually inflict on them any other pain."[170] Such malicious deprivations lent plausibility to stories of bloody beatings; hunger pointed to the more vivid, compelling welts on the slave's back. Whipping—and its scars—dominated antislavery rhetoric. Scars told tales that nobody could deny; they clearly pointed to the pain-producing agency of slaveholders. In the *Slave's Friend* one girl reflected that "the *stripes* in the national flag make me think of the stripes the poor slaves suffer."[171]

Slavery's critics relentlessly underscored the visible, sensory, and concrete details of deliberately inflicted pain, even when that did not provide the most obvious point of attack. Activists used the language of physical cruelty to describe less visible or less mentionable evils, particularly sexual injuries and violations of family life. In antislavery accounts the whip ruptured family life and violated sexual purity. One African American writer commanded her readers to imagine themselves as slaves, "bound down, shamelessly exposed, and a cat hauled up and down your back to gratify the revenge of some lustful brute of an overseer."[172] The association of whipping and sexual violence was hardly new, but the growing emphasis on physical pain reinforced it.

Whipping, likewise, symbolized emotional cruelty to families. A woman was whipped for feeding her baby; another mother was forced to rub her son's wounds with salt and pepper.[173] Another enslaved woman, David Lee Child reported, was whipped to death, and "to complete the climax of horror, she was delivered of a dead infant before her master had completed his work!"[174] Slavery violated the rights of men to protect their wives, mothers,

and children from "pollution" or torture, and it denied the rights of women to love and nurture their children or to be faithful to their husbands.[175] Even friendships fell victim to the whip; as one activist explained, "Instead of being allowed to comfort and assist one another, the slaves are often compelled to hold one of their number, while another wretched being is forced to apply the lash."[176]

Slavery's critics also used the imagery of blood to symbolize and measure the enormity of slavery's evil or the extent of Americans' guilt. Black abolitionists in Newark, New Jersey, reflected that "if all the blood of our colored brethren, shed by the people of the United States, since the Declaration of Independence, was kept in a reservoir, the framers . . . might swim in it."[177] Andrew Harris, an African American, similarly suggested that his audience would drown in the collected blood of slaves.[178] The guilt of slavery showed in the blood and pain slavery produced. George Bourne insisted that slavery's "uniform and essential predominating quality is blood, *human blood!*"[179]

By the end of the 1830s, humaneness had morphed from a broad, vague category into a fiercely contested moral directive. Calls for sympathy, humaneness, and benevolence sounded across the ideological spectrum. In the abstract humaneness seemed a clear, simple language; it promised to pity sufferers, relieve pain, and censure tormentors who callously inflicted pain. Much of the attraction of humanitarianism lay in its seeming clarity, the idea that the humane course should be clear to all people of goodwill. Yet the apparent simplicity of humanitarianism obscured the actual complexity and ambivalence of American moral thinking about pain and moral responsibility. Although Americans agreed that inflicting unnecessary pain was wrong, they could not agree on where to draw the line between necessary and unnecessary pain. Likewise, Americans' common belief in the value of humaneness did not translate into a shared understanding of how to define moral responsibility for the suffering of enslaved blacks. Competing assumptions about sympathy, practical benevolence, human agency, and moral responsibility for pain tugged humanitarianism in competing directions. Humanitarianism proved to be a strikingly malleable idea that served a wide variety of ideological positions. Far from trumping the debate over slavery, the language of humanitarianism added fuel to the fire.

Yet humanitarianism beckoned; invoking humaneness seemed to promise a way out of endless debating. In 1839 antislavery activists could plausibly

conclude that they would win the battle over cruelty; they assured themselves that they had amassed enough proof of slaveholders' villainy to destroy any pretensions of benevolence. As Americans increasingly challenged the morality of inflicting pain, appealing to the physical cruelty of slavery proved too irresistible an opportunity to resist. Yet it was also a dangerous opportunity. If slavery's true wrong lay in "its death-stab into the soul of the slave," activists still spent much of their time trying to prove the cruelty done to the bodies of slaves.[180] Confident that they could easily win by proving slavery's cruelty, slavery's critics also committed themselves to fighting the battle in those terms. Proslavery writers, however, were unwilling to concede their shared revulsion against pain to antislavery writers, and though antislavery polemicists made inroads, it was not clear that the language of pain would benefit only antislavery. By the end of the decade arguments over pain cut both ways.

CHAPTER FIVE

Suited for Slavery, 1840–1851

By 1839, when Theodore Dwight Weld published *American Slavery as It Is*, proslavery and antislavery activists had committed themselves to proving slavery's humaneness or cruelty. Both sides also expected such proof to settle the debate. Humaneness gained moral power precisely because humaneness seemed so clear; it demanded an end to the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain. Who could object to compassion, humaneness, and benevolence? Charges of cruelty enticed writers with the promise that humaneness would cut through moral confusion and settle moral disputes. Yet instead of producing moral clarity, humanitarianism sparked disputes. Weld's book aimed to dispel any myths of slavery's humaneness by demonstrating, beyond a doubt, the cruelty of slavery. Although Americans continued to believe that humanitarianism had a clear, unequivocal meaning, the very need for such a book belied that seeming clarity. For humanitarianism to have a clear, unequivocal meaning for Americans, both parties would have needed to agree whether slavery entailed pain, and whether such pain was both intolerable and worse than the alternatives. They could not agree on either score. As

polemicists marshaled humanitarianism to battle the forces of evil, humaneness proved both malleable and slippery.

Instead of settling the debate, claims of cruelty and benevolence only escalated it and created a war of competing narratives aimed at establishing the *true* reality of slavery. Despite antislavery claims to have proved slavery's cruelty beyond a doubt, proslavery writers did not surrender. Rather, they redoubled their efforts, challenging the quality of antislavery proof and countering with evidence and narratives of their own to prove the benevolence of slavery. Americans did not fight only over abstract moral principles about enslavement or humanitarianism. Instead, Americans had to choose between two competing and incompatible visions of slavery's reality, and they often had to do so with limited personal experience with slavery itself. Slavery's critics and defenders had to convince Americans that they, not their opponents, described slavery most truthfully and accurately. Travelers to the South thus took care to note and report on the conditions of slavery, but relatively few Northerners could travel to settle the question for themselves. The conditions of slavery were thus often an abstraction in the debate. Increasingly, the debate—and the proof offered by both sides—took on a life of its own, creating a cycle of charge and countercharge that made humanitarianism both more important and more contested. The debate over cruelty only escalated. Neither side could settle the debate over cruelty, nor would they abandon it. Each side grew dependent on this moral language, and the growing moral importance of pain pushed each to make its points ever more stridently.

Far from settling the debate, appeals to humaneness spawned mutual incomprehension and hostility. In theory, sharing a moral language of humaneness might have eased communication. In practice, however, both sides insisted that the meaning of humaneness was clear but rejected their opponents' definitions. The sharing of terms thus only convinced both sides that their opponents lacked good faith.

As Americans fought over the humaneness or cruelty of slavery, the debate mushroomed into a broader conflict over the nature of humanitarianism, sympathy, and benevolence. By the mid-1840s the gory rhetoric of the previous decade had sent tremors through American institutions and had destabilized moral assumptions. As Americans divided over humaneness—and fought for exclusive right to the label—the battle over humaneness drew more and more casualties. By the 1840s the debate over slavery increasingly

fed political divisions, especially as politicians began to grapple seriously with the issue of slavery and westward expansion. As the stakes of humaneness grew, American moral thought and culture became increasingly polarized.

"The Most Humane Act"

On October 19, 1843, the father of John Gorham Palfrey, a Massachusetts scholar and politician, died on his Louisiana plantation. He left his property, valued at approximately $45,000, to his three sons, Gorham (as John Gorham was called), William, and Henry.[1] This inheritance included fifty-one slaves, which posed moral and political problems for Gorham, who, unlike his Louisiana brothers, had been educated in Massachusetts and was building a career as an antislavery politician.[2] Gorham's brothers, knowing his views, offered to give him his share in nonhuman property, but he refused, viewing it as the moral equivalent of selling slaves. Not only did he insist on inheriting his share; he also requested the lot with the largest number of slaves.[3] Gorham engaged Adam Giffen, a family friend, to represent him and arrange the enslaved laborers' emancipation.[4] The simple plan sparked unexpected opposition. Gorham hoped that the freedpeople would stay in Louisiana, and he thought William would gladly hire them. He was quite mistaken; his brothers and the state of Louisiana objected.

Gorham's brothers presented numerous practical objections, but they argued most strongly that manumission would make both his and their slaves unhappy. The plan, William objected, would break apart families and spark "much dissatisfaction and murmuring" among those left behind.[5] Gorham suggested that the freed laborers stay, but William refused to allow them to remain. Free laborers, Giffen explained, would "submit with an ill will," and their enslaved counterparts would resent them.[6] Gorham's humaneness would render everyone miserable. Henry grew "annoyed & fretted" as news of the proposal spread around the neighborhood; he, like William, worried that the plan would make the other slaves "restless and unhappy."[7] Henry fumed about Gorham's plans, complaining that "instead of being humane to your Negroes—they will prove cruel." Enslaved blacks, if given the choice and time to reflect, would rather stay, for they would not be able to take care of themselves elsewhere. Furthermore, laws compelled the removal of manumitted blacks, which meant separating friends and relatives. "The most humane act," Henry argued, "would be to continue them all on the same

plantation where nearly all of them were born & raised—& their husbands or wives living on the adjoining plantations."[8]

The antislavery Palfrey was little inclined to see keeping human beings in slavery as "the most humane act." Disregarding his brothers' wishes, he traveled to Louisiana to offer freedom to the enslaved laborers. Most decided to work for wages for the remainder of the agricultural year before migrating.[9] When one man hesitated to leave his family, Gorham allowed him to remain but legally guaranteed him freedom and passage to the North upon request. Fertile women, in contrast, had no choice, since their choice to remain enslaved their future children.[10] In 1845 Gorham brought the freedwomen and freedmen north, at considerable expense, and helped them get settled. Gorham also emerged as an influential opponent of the "slave power"; perhaps his father's death removed his hesitance, or perhaps his frustrating experience politicized him. Lydia Maria Child had hesitated, in the 1830s, to send Palfrey her latest book on abolition for fear he would find it "offensive"; in 1844 she confided that she had helped one of his brothers' slaves to escape.[11]

Palfrey's decision and emerging activism tore a rift in the family about the humaneness of slavery and emancipation, extending until after the Civil War. By 1848 the brothers' relations had grown icy; William ignored Gorham's letters. When asked, William cited Gorham's political opposition to slavery, while disclaiming any objection to Gorham's manumissions as "none of my business." Yet the manumissions bothered William intensely. He felt the sting of Gorham's criticism of slaveholding as inhumane. Gorham built political capital "at the expense of father's memory,—for who will fail to have this contrast presented to his mind"—or, for that matter, the contrast with William's behavior. William's own views were "as philanthropic, (though not similarly directed) as your own." Without colonization, William insisted, emancipation was worse than slavery. In contrast to the cruelty proposed by abolitionists, he took pleasure in witnessing and aiding in "the gradual increase in the comforts, and improvement of the condition of these people."[12] In an extremely hostile letter in 1865, William again contrasted his own and his father's philanthropy with Gorham's. *They* had honored family ties for fifty-five years; Gorham had scattered relatives, "who have not seen each other since & never will."[13]

By 1843, when John Palfrey died, slavery's defenders and critics glared at each other over a chasm of mutual incomprehension; sharing a moral language only deepened that moral gulf. As opponents grew more attached to

the vocabulary of humaneness, they frustrated each other by disagreeing over what humaneness, cruelty, and sympathy meant in practice. After a decade of trying to prove slavery's "undeniable" cruelty, critics assumed that they could lay exclusive claim to humanitarianism.[14] Images of cruelty proved so unexceptional that a children's book even alphabetized the wrongs of slavery: *L* stood for the lash that terrorized children, *W* for the whipping post.[15] In the abstract, one might sympathize "with the poor aggrieved planter, of whom so many unpleasant things are said," Ralph Waldo Emerson argued in 1844, but at the sight of whippings, "the stomach rises with disgust, and curses slavery."[16] Antislavery alone served "the cause of bleeding humanity."[17] Nothing could be more apparent to antislavery writers than their own humanity and slaveholders' cruelty. Yet, as Frederick Douglass noted in 1846, no other antislavery charge was "more frequently disputed."[18]

Such denials of cruelty were not new, but proslavery writers now made stronger, positive claims for slavery's humaneness. John Gorham Palfrey did not expect his brothers to abandon slavery in the name of humanity, but he was stunned when they accused *him* of cruelty. A great deal had changed. In 1827 the Palfreys' father had boasted to Gorham that, on his plantation, "~~severity~~ punishment is almost altogether unnecessary & is very rarely inflicted."[19] Now slavery's defenders not only denied that cruelty existed; they also insisted that slavery—an "enviable lot"—itself ensured the happiness of enslaved blacks.[20] Freedom was a cruel sham that left free blacks at "perfect *liberty to die*."[21] As the debate progressed, proslavery arguments—like those of their critics—grew more extreme. Yet proslavery claims continued to startle new antislavery activists.

Antislavery attacks on slaveholders' characters only multiplied as slavery's critics grew frustrated with their failure to convince slaveholders to abandon—or at least criticize—slavery in the name of humanity. Even many slaveholders inclined to view slavery as a necessary evil refused to condemn its inhumanity. On the contrary, slavery was necessary precisely because it was cruel to emancipate helpless slaves. Despite slaveholders' desire to rid themselves of slavery, defenders claimed, they did not because it would harm the slaves themselves.[22] This stubborn refusal to acknowledge slavery's basic inhumanity led critics to denounce slaveholders as incapable of humanity. Joseph Albert Pease wrote bitterly to William Lloyd Garrison that appealing "to the sympathies & the humanity of the Slave Holder is as useless as an appeal to the Wild Beasts." Slaveholders would never voluntarily end slav-

ery.[23] Antislavery denunciations, in turn, only convinced proslavery polemicists of what they already knew: that their attackers cared little about the true interests of enslaved blacks. A proslavery Kentuckian wrote to a Rhode Islander that the free states took little genuine interest in slaves' welfare: "they have not a moiety of the sympathy for them that we have."[24] Simultaneously, proslavery writers ratcheted up their own claims in the 1840s: far from partaking in cruelty, slavery showered blessings on African Americans.

Proslavery claims to humaneness dumbfounded slavery's critics—especially because so many white Americans continued to believe those claims. Slaveholders seemed even less likely to convert when they argued for the westward expansion of slavery. Antislavery activists thus redoubled their efforts to prove not only slavery's cruelty but slavery's inherent, inalienable cruelty. Antislavery visions of converting slaveholders began to give way to claims that slavery depended on violence and intimidation to keep slaves in line. Slaveholders would never surrender the violence required to maintain the institution. Indeed, the essential cruelty of slavery would corrupt any efforts at reform; the South foundered in a mire of cruelty and barbarism.

The growing intensity of competing claims echoed through American culture, especially as westward expansion made it more difficult for politicians to avoid the debate. Since slavery could not be divorced from cruelty, slavery's critics suggested, all slaveholders necessarily and individually acted cruelly. The antislavery insistence on slavery's cruelty—and the necessary cruelty of slaveholders—pushed conflict over slavery and humaneness into new arenas, splitting benevolent organizations, churches, and American society. By the 1840s the debate over slavery's cruelty morphed into a larger battle over the meaning of humanitarianism and philanthropy. What did humaneness really mean? Who had the right to claim benevolence, humanity, or philanthropy? The debate, though abstract, had concrete stakes. Allowing slaveholders—or the South—to claim benevolence in *any* arena undermined the moral clarity of humanitarianism and lent credence to proslavery claims of humaneness. As activists drew hard lines between humane abolitionists and cruel slaveholders, they created and sharpened divisions throughout society.

By the 1840s the slavery debate politicized the meaning of humanity and philanthropy in the broader intellectual culture. In 1846 a Princeton student sniffed at the new "Age of Bliss": "every new scheme" invoked "Philanthropy."[25] Five years later, another Princetonian noted that "Philanthropy

and Humanity have everywhere become watchwords."[26] It thus became critical to define one's own position in such terms and to clarify exactly what philanthropy, reform, and benevolence *really* meant. Student essayists debated the nature of "true and false philanthropy" and attacked the evils of the "Pseudo-Philanthropist."[27] True philanthropy, a proslavery student insisted in 1845, was directed at "the reform of local abuses, the moderation of laws, the establishment of benevolent institutions."[28] In 1847 another Princetonian denounced false benevolence, which showed "the most tender regard for humanity [while] it cares not a whit for the man."[29] Other students demanded reform of a society in which some "live, and sport, and trifle, on what others have produced with toil and pain."[30]

Proslavery and antislavery activists eagerly wrapped themselves in the mantle of benevolence and yanked it off their opponents, even when they were not directly fighting about slavery. Southern claims to *any* kind of humanitarianism were met with furious denunciations; even Irish famine relief sparked a battle. A Kentuckian remarked in 1845 that European famine gave Americans a chance to display "their most boasted charity and philanthropy."[31] And therein lay the danger for antislavery: slaveholders should not share in that boasting. In 1847 Richard Allen, a Dublin Quaker, asked, "*Shall we accept the money sent by slaveholding communities, even to save our countrymen from starvation?*" The stakes were high: accepting money would "ratify their character for Christian benevolence." Taking their "blood-stained contributions to the sacred cause of suffering humanity," he added, would justify slaveholders' "pretensions to genuine kindness and compassion."[32] Not coincidentally, activists identified the antislavery battle as service to "suffering humanity."[33] If the cause of "suffering humanity" enrolled slave owners, what could it really mean? Defenders of slavery, too, recognized the political stakes of their benevolence. They denounced the "horde of Monsters" persuading the Irish to die rather than accept southern charity.[34] In 1847 James Henry Hammond received a letter from a northern reader who praised Hammond's comparison of free and slave labor and suggested that slaves should raise money to relieve the suffering Irish. That would silence the abolitionists.[35]

Philanthropic efforts became minefields as antislavery contingents decided that the purity of benevolence depended on excluding slaveholders. Feuds erupted in churches across America and beyond. In Scotland, when Thomas Chalmers's newly organized Free Church broke off from the established church, it raised money from American Presbyterians. By 1844 efforts

to raise money in the South outraged those who believed that the church should reject slaveholding members and their money. Chalmers opposed slavery, but he fueled the conflict by writing a letter (which Southerners quickly printed) criticizing the drive to excommunicate slaveholders and denouncing attempts to "unchristianize that whole region."[36] In turn abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, insisted vociferously that the church should send back the "blood-stained money—money wrung from the groans, the sweat, the tears, and the blood of the slave."[37] When Douglass toured Britain and Scotland, he insisted that "the slave cannot be held as a slave without cruelty."[38] Accepting money from slaveholders gave respectability to moral monsters.

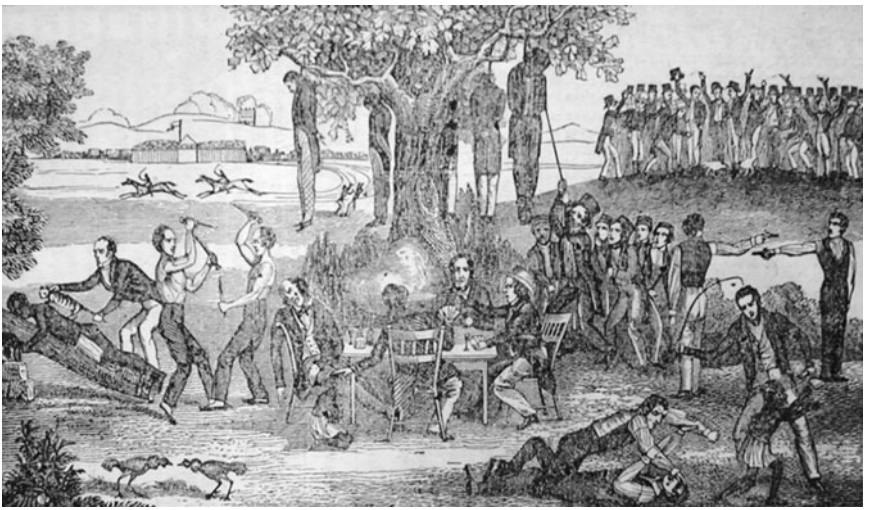
The escalating rhetoric of cruelty polarized churches and religious groups. Should humane critics of slavery ever cooperate—or join in fellowship—with cruel slaveholders in *any* way? The American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions faced a thorny question of how to deal with slaveholding Cherokees. Would forcing potential converts to emancipate slaves set the bar too high for conversion? Might the board not leave Christianity time to soften converts' hearts? In 1845 a committee concluded that it could. Instead of defining church membership on the matter of emancipation, membership would depend on the treatment of enslaved laborers. Slaveholders who did not abuse slaves could remain; "cruelty, injustice, or unkindness" merited admonition or eventual excommunication.[39] The compromise infuriated radical abolitionists who believed that slaveholding *necessarily* entailed cruelty. All owners, William Patton fumed, saw themselves as "kind and indulgent." Besides, the board could not permit slaveholders to own slaves but "not use the means necessary to retain them!" Slaveholders had to resort to whipping, branding, and inflicting pain to keep enslaved laborers in subjection.[40] The split in the board mirrored fractures in churches in the 1840s as antislavery activists debated whether remaining in fellowship with slaveholders justified their claims to humanity, compassion, and Christianity.

Insistence that slaveholders inevitably relied on cruelty helped sharpen and reinforce sectional divisions in the nation, as well as in churches.[41] Polemicists occasionally described slavery and its cruelty as a stain on American national glory, singing "My country! 'tis of thee, / Stronghold of slavery."[42] More often, however, cruelty took on strong regional connotations, particularly as "the South" evolved into shorthand for "slaveholding states." Pamphlets had long treated slavery and its cruelty as a distant, peculiarly

southern (or West Indian) problem. As slavery retreated in the antebellum North, the temptation to view the North as a land of humanity and the South as a "land of Whips & chains" intensified.[43] James Russell Lowell lamented that a globe taught lessons in sympathy and "geographical humanity": benevolence could spread north, west, or east, but never south.[44] Cruelty itself seemed inscribed in geography, and cruelty and climate merged rhetorically. In 1835 James Gillespie Birney boasted that he had observed slavery "not only under its milder aspect in Kentucky, its temperate zone, but in its increased severities in the more torrid South."[45] Debates over Texas and the Mexican cession—and the rise of the Free Soil Party—only reinforced the geographic character of antislavery rhetoric about cruelty.

Among antislavery Northerners slavery reflected and reinforced the wider barbarism of southern culture. Slavery, one expatriated Northerner complained from Louisiana, exerted a "blighting influence . . . upon the whole face of society."[46] In 1840 the *American Anti-Slavery Almanac* printed a picture titled *Our* Peculiar *Domestic Institutions,* a panoramic view of southern violence and vice. Gambling male slaveholders sit under a tree in which five white men are being lynched (a reference to the antigambling riots of Vicksburg in 1835, which slavery's critics also associated with mob violence against suspected slave insurrectionists).[47] To the side, white men fight with knives, wrestle, race horses (with crops brandished), and duel. Distant crowds watch a cockfight, and two cocks face off in the front left. A white man whips a black child, from whom he snatches a book. On the far left, with few visual distractions, a white man drags a cat down the back of a nearly naked enslaved victim. In the engraving, cruelty to slaves mirrors a larger, fundamentally inhumane culture of white male barbarism.[48]

Attacks on the wider barbarism of southern culture served vital purposes. Proslavery writers claimed that the power of public opinion ensured that slaveholding cruelty was rare; offenders faced public execration. Abolitionists responded by challenging the moral character of public feeling in the South. Slaveholders who dueled, tormented horses and roosters for sport, and lynched whites would not blink when their neighbors tortured enslaved blacks. Corrupted public opinion offered no protection. "Whippings are so common," Jonathan Walker told children, that only "extreme cases" attracted any notice.[49] Perhaps even extreme cases would not elicit public censure. Slaveholders literally got away with murder. In 1840 the *American Anti-Slavery Almanac* described, in gruesome detail, an 1811 murder perpetrated



Our Peculiar *Domestic Institutions.* Slavery's defenders maintained that individuals' benevolence and the power of public opinion protected slaves, and cruelty was thus a rare, isolated occurrence. In response, images such as this one from the 1840 *Anti-Slavery Almanac* suggested that cruelty suffused southern culture. The white South, the engraving suggested, was a barbaric culture taking delight in numerous forms of cruelty, including cruelty to animals, to enslaved blacks, and to other whites. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac of 1840* (25). Courtesy of Brown University Library.

by two of Thomas Jefferson's nephews. As the almanac reported it, the two men, Lilburne and Isham Lewis, forced their slaves to watch them slowly—over several hours—cut off the feet, legs, and arms of an enslaved seventeen-year-old named George. The murderers tossed the body parts into the fire while George writhed in pain, begging to be killed quickly. The almanac emphasized the brothers' fiendish cruelty in refusing to kill the boy quickly, even though other accounts suggested that George died instantly and was dismembered only after death. Lilburne killed himself, and Isham escaped from jail and fled the state; the case was closed only after reports of Isham's death. As the almanac portrayed it, however, public opinion did little to stop such cruelty against slaves; the almanac reported that Isham escaped to Natchez, where he stayed in contact with his former neighbors.[50] Such neighbors could not be trusted to censure even the most horrifying cruelty.

Slaveholding public culture, critics contended, supported cruelty. The same 1840 issue of the *Anti-Slavery Almanac* printed an account, embellished with an engraving, of the 1836 lynching of Francis McIntosh in St. Louis.

McIntosh, a free black man, had stabbed an officer arresting him, and a white mob responded by tying McIntosh to a tree and burning him alive. His attackers, however, escaped punishment. The aptly named Luke Lawless, a Missouri circuit court judge, called it the act of "a *majority* of citizens" and discouraged the indictment of the offenders.[51] The imagery of public burning and description of the victim, who "attempted to sing and pray, and then hung his head and suffered in silence," cast McIntosh as a martyr and the crowd as fiendish persecutors. A large crowd of white men waved their hats in delight while watching the man burn. The caption made it clear that it was a "LAWLESS" act done "BY THE MANY." Slave societies delighted in pain. They even raised their children in cruelty: a child added wood to the fire.[52] After McIntosh's "eyes burnt out of his head," one man suggested ending it by shooting him. When the dying man begged to be shot, one torturer responded that he "*would sooner slacken the fire, if that would increase his misery.*"[53] As in the account of Jefferson's nephews, slaveholders not only murdered people but also refused to kill them quickly; they wanted to see victims suffer as much as possible while dying. Such incidents dramatized a horrific level of social tolerance, even delight, in cruelty. Slaveholders' tortures were not private acts of violence; they flourished in a public culture of barbarism.

Wholesale attacks on southern humanity infuriated slaveholders, who believed themselves at least as humane, if not much more so, than Northerners; antislavery criticisms were "the bare assertion of persons a thousand miles distant."[54] In a letter to an old Harvard classmate turned New Hampshire senator, William Elliot of South Carolina griped that abolitionists depicted Southerners as "a race of tyrants rejoicing in the clank of chains—and the cries of suffering humanity."[55] Another Virginian complained that northern perceptions of southern cruelty could almost "make us wish for a division of the union."[56] Southerners, in turn, went on the offensive. Defenders of slavery attributed abolitionist sentiment to distance, malice, or both. They fought back not only by attacking northern cruelty to the poor and wage workers but also by insisting, as James Henry Hammond did, that Northerners who moved to the South stood second only to British immigrants in cruelty to slaves. Northerners contaminated Southerners' humane institution by importing cruelty. Slaveholding cultures, in contrast, "foster[ed] kindly feelings."[57]

Under the necessity of defining philanthropy, benevolence, and humanity in terms favorable to themselves, antislavery writers fought hard to cast

"*Lawless" Burning of Men "By the Many.*" During the 1840s slavery's critics increasingly insisted that cruelty pervaded not only the institution of slavery but the entire slaveholding society. This engraving depicting the lynching of Francis McIntosh showed that slaveholders' cruelties were not private or isolated acts of individual violence; instead, cruelty received public and legal support in slaveholding states. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840* (23). Courtesy of Brown University Library.

slaveholders beyond the pale of civilized, humane society and to define northern benevolence in opposition to southern barbarism. Humanitarian rhetoric should have drawn clear lines between the humane and the cruel. Within each camp those lines seemed clear. Yet humanitarianism failed to establish that clarity in the broader nation. The debate increasingly pushed both sides to define humanity and cruelty in increasingly sectional and absolute terms—and to fume when others failed to see it in the same terms. Debates over slavery in the territories, the southern commitment to maintaining parity in the Senate, and the formation of the Free Soil Party exacerbated tendencies to define cruelty in sectional terms. Increasingly, the two sides not only piled up competing anecdotes but also constructed competing visions of slavery's reality. The language of humaneness did not single-handedly create sectionalism, but it intensified the bitterness. As polemicists failed to convince others, they attributed malice to their opponents. Rather than convincing their opponents, however, their rhetoric increasingly reinforced their own beliefs.

Ubiquitous Cruelty

The struggle to establish clear lines between the humane and the cruel built upon and reinforced a growing insistence on the irredeemably cruel nature of slavery. Theodore Dwight Weld's 1839 compendium of cruelty demonstrated its frequency and thereby strengthened claims that it was practiced universally. But even as some activists heralded such works as fatal blows to slavery, others soon worried that such tactics failed to bring the promised results. Perhaps such tactics even injured the antislavery cause. The strategy of focusing on slavery's irremovable cruelty bore risks. As antislavery songs invoked "scourges and fetters / all clotted with blood," slaveholders fought hard to define slaveholding as the "most humane act." Worse, many white Americans doubted antislavery claims.[58] Lurid pictures of individual cruelty or southern barbarism revolted readers, but the very grisliness of those portrayals inspired doubts. As James Freeman Clarke, a critic of slavery, explained in 1842, cruelties took on "a preposterous magnitude in the imagination." Readers imagined constant whipping and slaves "dripping with blood."[59] Countless travelers visited the South and took the opportunity to settle their own minds on slave treatment, and gruesome rhetoric backfired when experience did not live up to the rhetoric. Travelers who did not see blood gushing out of victims' wounds or slaveholders tying cats to the backs of enslaved blacks could easily conclude that imaginative writers had fabricated not only those particular incidents but everything. More disturbingly, such travelers might decide "slavery was not so very bad a system after all."[60]

Abolitionists dreaded this possibility. Even a critic of slavery might remark, as did J. Milton Emerson, that Virginian slaves were "treated in a very kind manner" and seemed "well contented."[61] Emerson still objected to slavery, but abolitionists griped that superficial appearances deluded travelers. A Scottish abolitionist urged British readers to read travel accounts cautiously: "casual visitors," especially those who only visited large towns, would not see true cruelty. Hospitable slaveholders did not put cruelty on display, and slaves risked punishment if they told visitors the truth.[62] Yet, while invoking hidden cruelty allowed writers to explain away travelers' testimonies, such responses posed problems. The claim that slaveholders hid their cruelties from prying eyes fit uneasily with the antislavery argument that cruelty suffused southern public culture. By portraying the South as a land of unfettered cruelty, abolitionists created a vision of slaveholders—and

southern society—that many Americans could not or would not believe. Monsters living on human blood made lively rhetoric, but this did little to convince skeptics—especially in an age boasting confidence in the natural goodness of human nature.

Not only did activists fear that Americans would accept slavery as "not so bad after all"; slavery's critics also insisted that the true wrong of slavery lay in an evil far worse than bodily pain. Even here, however, activists returned to the rhetoric of cruelty. Antislavery works established the soul-destroying effects of slavery by rehearsing, and then dismissing as lesser evils, details of physical cruelty. "Cruel, monstrous, and heart-rending" wrongs to the body were "but dust in the balance" against injuries to the mind and soul.[63] Lunsford Lane, the author of a slave narrative, spoke of the "spirit-bruised (worse than lash-mangled) victim."[64] Invoking the spiritual, moral, and intellectual wrongs of slavery did not displace images of physical cruelty; instead, it relied on that imagery to evoke horror. Most writers tried to have it both ways: establishing the utter cruelty of slavery while claiming that cruelty was not the worst evil. Furthermore, despite claims to the contrary, most antislavery writers did not view cruelty as merely incidental to slavery. The violence done to the minds of enslaved victims rested on the cruelties done to their bodies. Slaveholders' denials of cruelty made no sense, William Lloyd Garrison contended, because treating a human being as a thing was no less cruel than whipping him or her. Just as importantly, however, proslavery claims rested on the absurdity that "whips, chains, thumb-screws, paddles, bloodhounds, overseers, drivers, patrols were not all indispensable to keep the slaves down."[65]

If tales of cruelty proved dangerous yet crucial, what could activists do? The conundrum only worsened as many whites continued to believe that individual owners—regardless of the institution—treated enslaved blacks kindly. Even as some abolitionists insisted on the utter impossibility of a humane slaveholder, others argued that evil lay not in the ubiquity of cruelty but in the enslaved person's vulnerability to it. James Freeman Clarke criticized rhetorical reliance on sickening "barbarities." Yet, Clarke added, those given "irresponsible power . . . will often abuse it." Slaves lay exposed to outrageous cruelties; human nature ensured that "such cases will not be rare."[66] Clarke might believe that "exaggeration" undermined the antislavery case, but his own arguments verged on claiming slavery's essential cruelty.

Perhaps the greatest threat came from the contention that cruelties existed but could be reformed away. Many Americans—including critics of

slavery—clung to the hope that slavery, even if cruel, could evolve into a more humane institution. Most antislavery polemicists dismissed that argument, but it swayed some moderates. Uzziah Cicero Burnap rejected the "party contention" of the slavery debate, and he insisted that critics should focus on the "practical abominations" of slavery rather than its "theory." If slavery could not survive without cruelty, as critics claimed, reform would effectively destroy slavery. If not, it would at least reform "a most miserable system" into "parental guardianship."[67]

Proslavery writers took such concessions as small victories, and they used these hopes to try to win support from those moderates—or at least to tear that support away from abolitionists. Images of a reformed, benevolent slavery countered images of cruelty. In 1849 the Baptist State Convention of Alabama offered a $200 prize for the best essay on the "duties of Christian masters to their servants." Two years later, Southern Baptists published three remarkably similar winning essays that not only outlined now-familiar reform expectations but also took aim at claims that cruelty inhered in slavery.[68] Reverend C. F. Sturgis of Greensboro, Alabama, countered "fancy descriptions of cruelties and barbarities, the most enormous and revolting," with "model farms, and mills, and manufactories."[69] Reverend Holland Nimmons McTyeire of New Orleans (later a Methodist bishop) warned slaveholders against the "heart-sickening, revolting spectacle" of poorly treated slaves. "Slavery agitators," he reminded readers, seized "upon such isolated cases and representing them as general, have excited disgust and indignation."[70] Banishing cruelty would score a major victory.

Despite their best efforts, polemicists fought an uphill battle to convince white Americans that slavery, despite any reform, remained inherently cruel. Even a self-proclaimed abolitionist in South Carolina "obliged" to hold a slave could write to her Massachusetts family that many blacks "are far better to be slaves then [*sic*] they would be were they free."[71] But activists could not abandon the strategy, because doing so would concede too much ground to slaveholders. One proslavery writer sneered at antislavery writers who "profess *now* to eschew treatment."[72] Antislavery writers, having staked their claims on the cruelty of slavery, could not easily extricate themselves even had they wished to. By pinning their case on cruelty, antislavery activists needed to convince Americans of that cruelty. Yet their proslavery opponents grew ever more adept at claiming that slavery served the true happiness of a dependent race.

Utility, Providence, and the Natural Slave

As happiness grew more central to Americans' conceptions of morality, apologists for slavery recognized the importance of arguing that slavery, far from torturing enslaved blacks, actually made them happy. In 1844 James Shannon, president of Bacon College in Kentucky, built a proslavery argument on the claim that "happiness is the end and aim" of existence.[73] Even a student writing a last-minute essay fell back on the piety that slavery promoted "human happiness."[74] Yet, as antislavery writers had long pointed out, few people would actually choose to switch places with a slave, despite the golden rule. Claims that whites would benefit from enslavement were few and far between. Indeed, in 1862 howls of protest erupted in New Orleans when the Catholic bishop Augustin Verot denied that slavery's legitimacy depended on race.[75] No matter how often slaveholders called slavery an "enviable lot," claims of its inherent benevolence relied, implicitly or explicitly, on racial assumptions.[76] Polemicists now routinely argued that blacks, unlike whites, would find happiness in slavery. Apologists increasingly described slavery as a benevolent divine plan. God's providence had suited blacks for slavery; they would best achieve happiness in that state. Claims for the *intrinsic* benevolence of slavery were closely intertwined with notions of essential, biological racial difference.[77]

During the 1840s, claims that God had specially designed blacks, unlike whites, to find happiness in slavery formed the core of proslavery argumentation. Proslavery apologists built a new set of arguments on a foundation that racism made compelling but did not create: natural theology and utilitarianism. Natural theology and theories of utility both contributed to the broader revulsion against pain in Anglo-American intellectual life. William Paley, whose theory of moral motivations irked professors, played a far less controversial role in antebellum colleges with his *Natural Theology* (1802). God, Paley argued, had benevolently designed the world to maximize creatures' happiness. In God's benevolent contrivances, creatures and environment suited each other perfectly. God customized each creature with different needs and appetites appropriate to its unique environment; creatures' happiness lay in staying in their allotted niches.[78] This emphasis on contrivance provided good fodder for proslavery writers to chew on.

And chew they did. Numerous apologists echoed Shannon in insisting that blacks would find happiness in their allotted role as slaves. God designed

blacks, destined for slavery, to be happy in it, just as He had suited other creatures to their environments. That whites would be unhappy as slaves was beside the point, since God had not designed whites for enslavement. As Louisa McCord explained in 1851, "Happiness and wretchedness, independent of absolute bodily suffering," depended not on the circumstances of life but "upon the suitableness of the character to the circumstances." Whites would "rebel" at slavery, while an enslaved black "finds, perhaps, his happiest existence." Forcing whites into slavery or blacks into freedom was as inappropriate as forcing a square peg into a round hole.[79] Not everyone rooted these differences in roles in physiology, but Americans in the 1840s grew more likely to see happiness as a function of particular, rather than universal, needs and wants. This focus on particularity extended well beyond the immediate debate over slavery and into the broader intellectual context.[80] A Princeton student reflected that most human beings would find their happiness in their native homes; "Parisian refinement" mattered little to the "Hottentot."[81] Happiness turned not on universal needs but on the particular needs and wants of particular people.

Neither hierarchy nor arguments from inferiority were new. Yet, under the pressure of the slavery debate, new ethnological arguments worked with a utilitarian natural theology to spin traditional arguments in new ways. Blacks no longer simply occupied a particular place in the social hierarchy: nature had designed them to find happiness in that role alone. Emancipation, by tearing them out of that niche, cruelly crushed their happiness. The burden of argument shifted from the concept of the organic society, in which each individual occupied a particular place, to the *benevolence* of one's social placement and the ethnological basis for it. One could no longer argue that social hierarchies permitted earthly suffering, to be compensated for in heaven. Social categories took root not in custom, power, or accidents of birth but in natural laws of human happiness and benevolent diversity. Rather than merely allowing whites to ignore the relevance of black pain, new ideas about race encouraged whites to deny the existence of that pain.

As apologists emphasized the particular needs and wants of particular groups, they found support in scientific racism. Antebellum Americans increasingly defined social roles and drew lines of hierarchy on the basis of perceived anatomical and physiological differences, whether sexual or racial. The idea that God had designed the bodies and personalities of African Americans for happiness in slavery grew, in part, because of the growing

popularity of scientific theories of race as a fixed biological category. By the early 1840s, Americans increasingly resorted to biological, rather than environmental, explanations for perceived racial differences.[82] Scientific racism helped apologists depict slavery as benevolent by demonstrating the physiological and mental suitability of blacks for slavery. Scientific racism gave slavery's apologists evidence of the radical differences between the bodies and minds of blacks and whites—ranging from comparative measurements of skull sizes (which ostensibly showed that whites had larger skulls) to claims that Africans and their descendants inhaled less oxygen.[83] Arguments from ethnology and physical anthropology fascinated southern intellectuals, and by the 1840s these arguments had taken on a strongly hierarchical and prescriptive tone.[84] Ethnology, Josiah Nott proposed in 1854, explained not only the "moral and psychical character" and "primitive organic structure of each race" but also the "position in the social scale that Providence has assigned to each type of man."[85] Race became destiny.

The specific content of scientific racism varied widely. The most radical theorists, such as Josiah Nott of Mobile, Alabama, even argued that Africans and their descendants belonged to a separate species, resulting from a separate act of creation. (Nott famously claimed that mulattos were hybrids and thus exhibited relative weakness and reduced fertility.) The theory of polygenesis—positing multiple origins of human beings—nevertheless remained deeply controversial in the South, in large part because polygenesis contradicted the Bible, which traced the human race to a single set of parents, Adam and Eve. While Nott and like-minded theorists challenged the historicity of the Genesis accounts—or even argued that the Bible recounted the history of only one race—many proslavery polemicists blanched at such arguments. Likewise, polygenesis posed theological difficulties for Christian narratives of the fall and redemption of humankind in which the human race inherited original sin from Adam and Eve. Although many southern racial scientists threw themselves behind polygenesis, slaveholders often found it shaky ground for a defense of slavery, especially for proving the benevolence of the institution.[86] In 1854, for example, George Fitzhugh denounced the theory, not only because it denied the scriptural principle of "common parentage" but also "because it encourages and incites brutal masters to treat negroes, not as weak, ignorant, and dependent brethren, but as wicked beasts, without the pale of humanity."[87]

Yet if only the most extreme racial theorists insisted that whites and blacks

were distinct species, far more defenders of slavery showed slavery's humaneness by blending scientific theories of racial difference with biblical arguments. Slavery's defenders often traced both slavery and racial difference to the biblical pronouncement of Noah upon his grandson: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25).[88] For antebellum defenders of slavery, the biblical "Curse of Canaan" (commonly, but inaccurately, described as the "Curse of Ham") showed not only that God approved of slavery in general but also that God destined Africans in particular for enslavement. Although the biblical passage mentioned only slavery, not skin color, over the centuries commentators increasingly linked the curse of slavery with blackness.[89]

By the 1840s some apologists for slavery increasingly described the "Curse of Canaan" or the "Curse of Ham" in terms sounding closer to a blessing than a curse. Samuel Cartwright invoked the biblical "decree" in 1843, but he aimed to prove the "Justice and Benevolence of the Decree Dooming Canaan to Be Servant of Servants." Cartwright, a Louisiana doctor, built his proslavery apologetics on the providential design of African Americans for slavery, linking scientific racism with the Bible. God had "pre-ordained" Africans, the "descendants of Canaan," for slavery, and God thus endowed them with numerous qualities to render them happy and contented in slavery. God had benevolently bestowed on blacks a different "organization of the brain, nerves and vital organs." Cartwright argued that "servant of servants is *re-written* in his anatomical structure, as plainly as it is in the original Hebrew of the Bible."[90] When Cartwright and other polemicists in the 1840s and 1850s "read" the anatomical structure of African Americans, they saw not only inferiority but a plan for slavery. That plan, Solon Robinson argued, ensured that slaves' happiness did not depend on the kindness of a slaveholder. Rather, Robinson insisted, "in his anatomical and physiological structure, his mind and body show a most wonderful *fitness of things*, to enable him to fulfill the destiny" of a slave.[91]

Claims that blacks found happiness in slavery both built on and reinforced theories of innate racial difference; the idea that blacks could find happiness in slavery also suggested that they—unlike whites—belonged in slavery. Since God sought the happiness of enslaved blacks, God suited not only their bodies but also their minds and dispositions for a life in slavery. For Cartwright blacks, unlike whites, needed little to be happy. As long as "their animal wants are gratified," he explained, enslaved blacks enjoyed a "remark-

able *dolce far niente* [sweet idleness]." Likewise, Africans and their descendants possessed submissive, docile natures that perfectly suited them for slavery.[92] In 1843 Cartwright still believed in the unity and common parentage of the human species, but he sharply distinguished the experiences of blacks—who, like animals, were motivated by the pleasures and pains of the body—with the intellectual pleasures enjoyed by whites. In countless ways blacks' bodies, minds, and personalities suited them to find happiness in slavery. This "wise provision" made slavery an "easy" and "*happy condition*," though whites would suffer miserably in it.[93]

In proslavery theory, when God destined blacks to find happiness in slavery, He also provided moral and physical laws to protect them. On both sides of the debate, antebellum Americans understood moral laws not simply as commands reinforced by rewards and punishments but as laws that, like those of natural philosophy, worked as a matter of cause and effect. Violating moral laws caused inevitable woes; heavy drinkers fell ill, not as punishment but as the natural effect of drunkenness. Moral laws prescribed, as well as described; misbehavior punished itself.[94] By the 1840s some polemicists claimed that God had implanted within African Americans an "innate protecting principle"; cruelty backfired on abusive slaveholders.[95] Morality commanded slaveholders to treat slaves well, but nature forced compliance. Attempts to lash enslaved blacks to elicit excessive work inevitably failed: overworked, mistreated slaves did even less work. The "good natured, obedient, timid domestic," Cartwright claimed, turned "into a stubborn demon, knowing no fear and feeling no pain." Self-interest dictated making enslaved blacks as comfortable and happy as possible.[96]

Many proslavery writers shared Paley's assumption that God had designed human beings for happiness in particular roles, and they defended slavery on precisely that utilitarian ground. The new ethnology proved that God had specially designed blacks for slavery. Medical opinion concurred: blacks felt less pain than whites.[97] Not all defenders of slavery relied on ethnology, but a growing array of whites now argued that blacks were particularly suited for happiness in slavery. One Kentuckian explained that throughout history blacks lived most comfortably in slavery; they thrived in the slavery that would kill whites. "Let him follow the Law of his nature," the Kentuckian counseled.[98] With or without ethnology many apologists viewed blacks as specially suited for an "anciently decreed" or God-given role.[99]

Uniquely designed for their position by a benevolent Creator, enslaved

blacks thwarted divine benevolence and jeopardized their happiness by pursuing the destructive dream of freedom. Happiness depended on "fulfilling their destiny" as slaves; those who attempted to "escape from their destiny" would end up "the most unhappy, discontented wretches in existence."[100] In a public letter to the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, James Henry Hammond suggested that "Satan in the guise of an abolitionist" would destroy the "Eden" of slavery; he privately warned Lewis Tappan to cease his satanic efforts.[101] Tappan similarly bore the brunt of Amos Kendall's wrath when Kendall's slave escaped: abolitionists enticed slaves to run away "from their *native country* to perish in the snows of Canada."[102] Kendall slipped easily into naturalizing the condition of slavery: enslaved blacks belonged in slavery in the warm South, now their native home; escape would kill them with an inhospitable environment.

If pain resulted from discontent with one's place in the divine order, the remedy lay in submitting to God's benevolent plan. Louisa McCord confidently insisted, "Our negro, for instance, feels by instinct that his condition is suited to his powers; and would, but for mischievous interference, never seek, never wish to change it."[103] Slavery's advocates were hardly alone in attributing happiness to discontent or, as one Princeton student put it, a "restless spirit of evil."[104] But slavery's defenders leaped on this point to suggest that enslaved blacks would find satisfaction only in accepting their natural role. James Henry Hammond reminded Lewis Tappan that Adam and Eve fell into sin in "the hope of bettering their condition"; discontent spawned sin and misery.[105] Human beings filled their needs and wants best by staying in their roles.

By the 1840s, proslavery writers regularly warned readers about the dangers of invoking compassion without considering natural hierarchies and diverse wants and needs. As slavery's defenders stressed the harmony between blacks' particular needs and enslavement, they also fought equalizing interpretations of sympathy, benevolence, and the golden rule. Sympathy relied on imaginative projection, imagining how one would feel in the situation of another; sympathy could thus mislead if one did not consider the peculiar suitability of blacks for slavery. Unlike antislavery sympathy, which stressed the possibilities of identifying with people across geographic and racial barriers, proslavery sympathy insisted that true sympathy depended on recognizing racial lines.[106] In 1835 James Kirke Paulding had argued that slavery's critics erred in "placing themselves, with all their experience of the

enjoyments of personal liberty, in his situation, and then imagining what he feels from what they would suffer in his place."[107] Common antebellum medical belief held that thresholds of pain varied widely according to age, sex, race, and state of "civilization," and blacks fell particularly low in that hierarchy.[108] One could not assume a common humanity, susceptibility to pain, or wants and needs across lines of sex or race.

Proslavery writers continued to invoke sympathy, but they rejected any egalitarian interpretations or leveling implications. Sympathy should spur action but not dethrone reason, and it should always flow locally through existing social relations—especially relations of inequality. James Henley Thornwell argued that "benevolence is an affection directed to a man's person, not to his civil or political relations." It in no way implied equality; it merely meant relieving suffering.[109] Abolitionists wrongly saw the golden rule in egalitarian terms, but theories of utility suggested other interpretations. If nature gave blacks and whites different needs, the golden rule—doing unto others what you would wish done to you—had to reflect those peculiar needs. The golden rule, as James Henry Hammond argued to Lewis Tappan, "simply meant that each man in his sphere of life[,] whatever it might [be], should act towards all others in their respective spheres as he would have them act towards him in his." Christ did not wish to create a "topsy-turvy state" in which the rich gave up their wealth simply because they would wish the rich to do so if they were poor themselves.[110]

Such inequalities and differences did not undermine sympathy; they actually strengthened it. William Hamilton of Alabama attacked the "spurious benevolence" aimed at inequalities. Inequalities and suffering served important purposes: training owners in benevolence and slaves in patience.[111] True humanitarianism respected the inequalities of nature. George Simmons likewise argued that inequality should strengthen sympathy. The lowliness of enslaved blacks should inspire sympathy in their owners, just as God benevolently sympathized with human lowliness. Human "brutish thoughts, our continual ingratitude, our indolence, and childish frivolity and passions, never drive away *his* tender providence."[112] In a second sermon Simmons insisted on an "*enlightened*" application of the golden rule, not to give slaves "whatever they ask, but whatever they would ask if they were wise."[113] Proslavery arguments depended on a vision of sympathy and humanity that demanded only a relief of suffering, not a leveling of social inequality. Enslaved blacks' lowly stature did not diminish slavery's humaneness. Natural

differences and inequality became the lens through which proslavery writers gazed at suffering.

Contented Slaves and Runaways

Critics of slavery were deeply frustrated by arguments that enslaved blacks belonged in slavery and were thus happy in it. Antislavery writers responded with two main rhetorical strategies, often using both in the same argument: first, challenging the claim that blacks were happy in slavery and, second, arguing that if they were, it only illustrated slavery's soul-destroying power. As proslavery polemicists claimed that blacks were happy in slavery and that distant Northerners simply did not see slavery's true, benevolent nature, critics insisted that it hardly took telescopic vision to recognize slavery's essential cruelty. Enslaved blacks, far from being contented, always sought freedom if given a true chance. Runaways testified to the natural love of liberty beating in slaves' hearts; simultaneously, that love of liberty proved that cruelty stood at the core of the institution. Only violence and intimidation could keep human beings enslaved.

Antislavery polemicists fought the claim that blacks belonged in slavery by arguing that enslaved blacks were miserable in slavery, experienced great pain, and sought liberty. Gory depictions of cruelty, now standard fare, contradicted proslavery claims of happiness. No trickery taught blacks to seek freedom or "shrink from torture and aspire to be more than beasts of burden."[114] But in the 1840s slavery's critics grasped the rhetorical value of another weapon: runaways and the ads trying to capture them. Runaways, after all, embodied proof that slaves did not live happy lives. Did happy people run away? To understand the cruelty of slavery, James Russell Lowell argued, one needed only look to the "thirty-thousand living instances" of cruelty, fugitives in Canada.[115] Ads for runaways proved that slaves lived in misery. After 1850 the harsh new Fugitive Slave Law similarly ate away at proslavery claims of enslaved blacks' happiness.

The slave narrative, likewise, exploded in popularity in the 1840s, especially after the publication of Frederick Douglass's famous narrative. Such narratives were not new; in 1838 Moses Roper recounted details of his constant attempts to escape slavery and the fiendish ingenuity of his masters' efforts to torture him into submission. Roper intended to expose slavery's cruelty, and he offered himself and his scars as proof of slaveholders' wicked-

ness.[116] Slave narratives continued to reveal the deep cruelty of slaveholders. Yet, as they grew popular in the 1840s, they served the equally important purpose of refuting the claims that blacks were specially suited for slavery and were contented in it.

Slave narratives in the 1840s directly countered proslavery professions of benevolence, especially in claims to care for sick or aged blacks. Far from protecting the sick, slaveholders targeted them for punishment when they could not work through their illnesses. Slavery, antislavery writers contended, so hardened "the heart to human suffering" that ancient Romans left their elderly slaves to starve to death.[117] Slave narratives provided proof closer to home. In 1849 Henry "Box" Brown described a slaveholder who punished a hired slave for being out sick for three days, inflicting "200 lashes upon the quivering flesh of the invalid." The man remained ill for a month, and the slaveholder refused to provide a food allowance. Yet, Brown noted, "Northern people tell me that a slave is better off than a free man, because when he is sick his master provides for him!"[118] When Jonathan Walker selected a story from Frederick Douglass's autobiography for his *Picture of Slavery, for Youth,* he chose the account of Douglass's grandmother fending for herself in old age, despite proslavery claims to care for the old and infirm.[119]

Abolitionists valued slave narratives because they authenticated abolitionist charges with first-person tales of torture and refuted proslavery claims. Who better could understand the happiness or misery of the enslaved? Unlike white polemicists, runaways could not be accused of failing to understand the true nature of a distant institution. Unlike sympathetic observers, runaways did not have to imagine themselves as victims of the lash. Milton Clarke remembered receiving three hundred lashes, and his brother Lewis had been forced to wash a fellow slave's back with salt: "*I have done it with my own hands.* . . . The flesh would crawl, and creep, and quiver, under my hands."[120] Crucially, ex-slaves confirmed what abolitionists already knew, but they provided the authenticity of firsthand experience and observation. As Frederick Douglass told an audience in Lynn, Massachusetts, though northern abolitionists "can depict its horrors, they cannot speak as I can from *experience;* they cannot refer you to a back covered with scars, as I can; for I have felt these wounds; I have suffered under the lash."[121] Douglass brought not only his back but implements of torture as concrete evidence. In Limerick, Ireland, he displayed an iron collar and cowhide whip; the whip had been "clotted with blood" when he acquired it. When Douglass displayed the whip,

he told how his master whipped a young woman "with that identical whip until the blood ran down her back."[122] Bloody accounts disputed claims of enslaved blacks' supposed contentment.

Despite the obvious utility of blood-stained accounts, the authors of slave narratives, including Douglass, showed reluctance to dwell on their own experiences as victims of violence. They did, under white pressure, downplay or eliminate allusions to or descriptions of enslaved blacks' violent resistance.[123] Yet when African Americans penned slave narratives, they departed from the conventions of white antislavery writing in substantial ways. Black actors had only the most limited of roles in white antislavery narratives of cruelty. In white narratives enslaved blacks were not protagonists; they served as broken, bruised, and helpless victims for whom whites showed sympathy. The drama of white narratives of cruelty, after all, was really about the wrongness of inflicting pain rather than the experience of suffering that pain. In contrast, the authors of slave narratives used their experiences of slavery and its cruelty to establish their own authority and agency rather than their victimhood. The narratives positioned the once-enslaved author as an actor or spectator, depicting *others* as the helpless victims. Cruelties perpetrated upon others, not the author, typically took center stage in the narratives. When speaking of their own experiences, instead of highlighting their subjection under the whip, as white antislavery texts commonly did, ex-slave authors stressed their resistance to slaveholders' cruelty and slaveholders' failure to suit them for slavery.

Certainly, such accounts did display helpless victims with whom readers could sympathize. As escapees positioned themselves as sympathetic actors, male authors often described women as the victims of cruelty. Male narrators cast themselves not as objects for others' sympathy but as spectators who sympathized with female victims' suffering. These strongly gendered accounts often evoked sexual violence. White men whipped women who refused their sexual demands. William Johnson described a master who stripped and whipped young women publicly. Although one woman refused to "be a slave to him on her feet, much less on her back," Johnson explained, other enslaved women submitted to the threats.[124] In such accounts resistance could not fully protect women's sexual purity; whipping stood in symbolically for rape and other sexual violence in antislavery works, especially slave narratives. In Douglass's account, the "terrible spectacle" of his Aunt Hester's whipping provided his most vivid description of cruelty. The sexual nature of the attack

stood out clearly; the master whipped her for spending time with a young man. Douglass "left to conjecture" the white man's interest in the beautiful woman, but few could miss the point; the passage immediately followed remarks on miscegenation. The master "stripped her from neck to waist," and after tying her to a hook so that she could barely stand on her toes, "she now stood fair for his infernal purpose."[125]

In contrast to depictions of women submitting to the whippings of lascivious slaveholders, male authors portrayed themselves as resisting whippings. Despite the traditional role for slaves in antislavery accounts, the authors of slave narratives chose not to portray themselves as object-victims for white sympathetic identification; rather, manly action defined their narratives. William Johnson openly described the sexualized beatings of women, but he insisted on his own refusal to submit to beatings. When one master tried, Johnson "seized the club." Even when injured, Johnson resisted, throwing the man down.[126] Douglass structured his own narrative around his manly resistance to aggression. He did (briefly) describe his injuries: Covey whipped him, "cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after."[127] What stood out most in his *Narrative,* however, was not the violence attempted but Douglass's resistance. When Covey first tried to whip him, Douglass refused to strip; Covey "rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger."[128] The spectacle of his aunt's whipping symbolized Douglass's entrance into slavery; his "resurrection, from the tomb of slavery" was his decision to resist further whippings. Though he remained a "slave in form," he was no longer a "slave in fact"; after that, Douglass "had several fights, but was never whipped."[129] In contrast to his depictions of slaveholders' cruelty to women, Douglass's accounts of his own whippings highlighted not subjection but the ultimate failure of whippings to beat out the man within.

The reluctance of slave narrators to dwell on their pain or subjection—combined with their insistent focus on the failure of slaveholders to complete their soul-destroying purposes—challenged the contention that blacks were suited for slavery. Their resistance testified to the love of liberty beating in their hearts. The "contented slave," Douglass argued, was necessarily "a thoughtless one." A slave could find happiness in slavery "only when he ceases to be a man."[130] Only fear kept this burning desire hidden. Douglass stressed that he feigned a lack of interest when encouraged to escape; whites often tricked enslaved blacks into running away in order to get a reward for catching them.[131] Appearances deceived. Seeming contentment masked the

anguished love of liberty within the heart. Likewise, the authors stressed the relative mildness of their own experiences, again reinforcing the impression that enslaved people, even "well-treated" ones, hated slavery. Henry "Box" Brown described no "horrid inflictions of the lash upon my naked body." Rather, he depicted slavery in the best light possible. Being spared the whip, however, did not make Brown happy; nor did it mean "slavery is not a cruel institution." Even while describing the mildness of their own treatment, slave-narrative authors treated cruelty as the norm. Brown thus mixed his personal experiences with his observations (which also allowed him to play the role of sympathetic spectator). Good fortune blessed him with mild treatment; his "comrades were not so fortunate."[132] Slave narratives showed both that slavery relentlessly tormented its victims and that no mildness could make slavery kind.

The accounts of ex-slaves also directly challenged the claims that blacks were naturally adapted for slavery. In his lectures Douglass delighted his audiences by mimicking proslavery natural theology: "God made one portion of men to do the working, and another to do the thinking; how good God is!" A moment later, Douglass praised "Providence": "Look at your hard, horny hands—see how nicely they are adapted to the labor you have to perform! Look at our delicate fingers, so exactly fitted for our station."[133] That "hard, horny hands" and "delicate fingers" resulted directly from servitude and idleness would not have escaped the audience; slaveholders naturalized enslavement by conflating cause and effect. They read divine purpose into the effects of violence.

Slave narrators—and other antislavery writers—spent much energy arguing that blacks were not suited to slavery and therefore hated it, but a second, parallel strategy (more often adopted by white authors than black ones) argued that if people could be happy in slavery, that only proved the degrading influence of slavery. Instead of acting under "the supremacy of the moral sentiments," J. Milton Emerson complained, slaves served "the supremacy of the animal propensities."[134] He blamed whites for enslaved blacks' relative contentment, ignorance, and lack of interest in freedom, but displacing the blame made his indictment of blacks no less severe. Nor was he alone. James Russell Lowell argued that slavery "crushes all to one dead level of stupid animalism or sullen despair."[135] James Freeman Clarke claimed that enslaved blacks, denied access to higher pleasures, enjoyed only "animal pleasures." He added that "the slave's nature never grows. The slave is always a child."[136]

Such a strategy had clear drawbacks. Although slavery's critics excoriated the perpetrators of the degradation, they nevertheless highlighted the moral degradation of enslaved people. For good reason this strategy appealed less to once-enslaved authors. Stressing the degradation of enslaved blacks could unintentionally raise questions of whether blacks were, if not suited for slavery, at least not quite suited for freedom or citizenship.[137] Many Americans pitied sufferers, but political traditions emphasizing manly resistance to oppression also fostered contempt for victims. James Henry Hammond, who later became one of the most prominent defenders of slavery, could say in an 1829 Fourth of July speech, with little irony, that "patience under usurpation is a word for slaves!"[138] Contentment in slavery qualified one for enslavement. Antislavery writers had no intention of arguing that, but by emphasizing the degradation of slavery, they fed doubts about the ability of blacks to thrive in freedom.

The Slave Trade

Since American law had forbidden the African slave trade since 1808, the slave trade seemed unlikely to spark a fight in the 1840s. Indeed, by the 1830s most polemicists treated the African trade as a moot point, and most antislavery activists redirected their aim at slavery and the "domestic" slave trade. Nevertheless, the growing feud over whether slavery rested on violence or benevolent design lent new relevance to discussions of slavery's origins. Critics of slavery stressed the violence of the trade to denaturalize slavery. Brute force and cruelty—not nature or God's design—created slavery. For slavery's defenders, appeals to divine design and natural theology raised troubling, albeit muted, questions about a long-standing distinction between already existing slavery and an illicit trade. Intellectually, that distinction belonged to another era, when slavery's defenders claimed only that slavery proved better than the unpalatable alternative of emancipation. But by the 1840s, as the most radical defenders of slavery argued that God purposefully fitted Africans and their descendants for slavery, the new ideas strained the old distinction.

The African slave trade had never entirely disappeared from antislavery rhetoric, especially in certain circles. Even as polemicists shifted their aim from the trade to domestic slavery, the trade lurked on the horizon. Trafficking continued illegally; the occasional interception of a slave ship exposed horrid

shipboard conditions. Antislavery Quakers, in particular, persisted in denouncing the illegal slave trade, and they had good reasons for doing so. Their tradition of activism stretched back to the eighteenth century, when the movement centered on the African trade. In the intervening years Quaker activists continued to focus on original acts of enslavement by challenging the kidnapping of free blacks and the domestic trade, especially as the growth of cotton cultivation made the domestic trade more visible.

Quakers hoped to undermine slavery itself by attacking its origins; they thus invoked the slave trade, even when it might not seem the most obvious point of attack. In 1844 Orthodox Quakers objected to the proposed annexation of Texas because it would promote slave trafficking; the internal slave trade shared the "cruelties and the abominations" of its foreign counterpart.[139] The following year, they denounced the cruelties of the trade, "which feeds & is fed by" slavery.[140] Hicksite Quakers reminded themselves in 1844 to pity not only suffering slaves but traffickers in slaves as well.[141] Quakers by no means fought exclusively against the slave trade, but it loomed large in their rhetoric.

Crucially, by highlighting the violence of slavery's origins, antitrade rhetoric belied proslavery claims that slavery was either benevolent or natural. New England Quakers stressed the "misery and suffering that are inseparably connected with Slavery from its very beginning." Slavery and the trade could not be separated; participation in slavery caused the trade's "manifold misery and crime."[142] Quakers' moral rhetoric had long depended on drawing lines of complicity for cruelty back to individuals' sins. Slaveholders—and their demand for enslaved labor—were to blame for the cruelty of the trade, whether legal or illegal. Captives lay on the decks of captured slave ships "in wretchedness and misery, and all the agony of despair." The ships left a trail of blood, literal and metaphorical, as ships trying to elude pursuers tossed captives overboard to speed their passage. New England Quakers darkly added, "Even the sharks know this field of bloodshed" and hungrily stalked slave ships.[143]

Proslavery polemicists, for the most part, publicly denounced the African trade and continued, as they had for decades, to distinguish it from the legitimate practice of slavery. When Pope Gregory XVI's 1839 encyclical *In Supremo Apostolatus* irritated many white Protestant Southerners by condemning the enslavement of Africans, Charleston's Catholic bishop, John England, quickly argued that the encyclical denounced only the trade, not

slavery. Slavery, he insisted, was "perfectly unconnected" with the condemned cruelty.[144] The distinction also mattered in non-Catholic circles. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, though fiercely proslavery, attacked northern humanity by blaming Northerners for the slave trade. The North had cruelly treated captives—and then foisted them on an unwilling Georgia. Slave ships, escorted by sharks, brought "naked, starving, sick, and dead, and dying human beings" to southern ports. In contrast to the heartless Yankees, Georgians "weep over these wretched victims of Yankee avarice."[145]

Although few whites argued for reviving the African trade in the 1840s, and most of slavery's defenders still disavowed the trade, proslavery claims that blacks were particularly suited to slavery nibbled away at those disavowals. Depictions of blacks as natural slaves slowly wore away at the longstanding assumption that violence was necessary to transform Africans into slaves who accepted their enslavement, or who at least accepted the impossibility of successfully resisting. If blacks were natural slaves, the process of turning a human being into a slave was not a violent and dehumanizing one. In some circles the confidence that blacks belonged in slavery muted the condemnations of the trade, making them sound increasingly perfunctory. Antislavery prodding had hit a sore point. As the Senate debated extending slavery in 1850, Jefferson Davis dismissed the idea of reviving the trade. But, he added, the trade had been "a blessing" for the African, and Davis invoked "the inscrutable wisdom of the decree which made him a servant of servants."[146] Five years earlier, John Carey of Maryland denied any intention of defending the trade, but he quickly argued that slavery benefited blacks, and he cited "their adaptation to service." Besides, they had served as slaves in Africa.[147] Carey joined other polemicists in naturalizing slavery. Rather than invoking old claims that justice permitted enslaving war captives, such defenders of slavery assumed Africans already lived in slavery. While Africans did suffer during the journey, they merely, as one Baptist minister argued, "made a happy exchange" of owners.[148]

Some of those polemicists even dismissed the widely acknowledged sufferings of the Middle Passage. The Baptist minister described the horrific tales as mere "figments of the imagination."[149] Others pinned the blame for the trade's misery squarely on its illegality and secrecy. Abolition, Jefferson Davis suggested, increased the trade's "horrors." Slavers stuffed captives into small vessels, and captives suffered from the "famine and disease caused by long delay on the coast," all in the hopes of escaping detection.[150] James Henry

Hammond argued in 1845 that enforcement efforts made the trade "more profitable and more cruel"; lifting such restrictions would reduce captives' suffering.[151] Violence no longer inhered in the process of transforming free Africans to slaves, but only in the specific—and changeable—circumstances of the trade.

As proslavery polemicists naturalized the condition of slavery, some grew reluctant to denounce the slave trade as evil in itself. If slavery showered blessings on Africans and their descendants, why should anyone object to the trade that secured those blessings? Slavery's defenders did not typically follow their logic to its conclusion in the 1840s; defending the trade remained taboo. But by the end of the decade the arguments that blacks were especially suited for slavery, that emancipation was cruel, and that slavery was a blessing had created hairline fractures in their distinction between the trade and slavery. Many authors still claimed that slavery served the truest needs of blacks, even as they added that enslaving Africans was outrageous cruelty. The fractures hid themselves from most people's view, but the distinction was weakening.

When polemicists on both sides began appealing to humaneness, it seemed simple: humaneness promised to provide moral clarity, perhaps even to gather Americans together into a common cause to banish suffering. Despite expectations that humaneness would forge a consensus around compassion, the proslavery and antislavery writers instead glared at each other across a chasm of incredulity. By the 1840s the need to prove slavery's benevolence or cruelty had set in motion a cycle of escalating rhetoric and hostility; the two sides grew more resolute in their arguments. Likewise, the spiraling rhetoric of humanitarianism pushed polemicists to reformulate their arguments and seek out a growing array of intellectual supports for their positions. In doing so, activists ignited a fierce debate over whether African Americans belonged, and would thus find their greatest happiness, in slavery or freedom. Theories of natural theology, benevolence, and the universality of human nature became fierce battlefields, opening new sources of conflict. What Americans believed about the implications of humanitarianism depended, to a great degree, on what they believed about slavery, but calls for humaneness reshaped and complicated the slavery debate. Humanitarianism had not settled the issue, but debates over the cruelty or humaneness of slavery strengthened the hold of humaneness on American moral thought.

CHAPTER SIX

The Contradictions of Benevolence, 1852–1861

By 1852 the debate over slavery and the debate over its humaneness had grown practically inseparable, albeit theoretically distinguishable. Decades earlier, that overlap had provoked less concern: both sides believed that the meaning of humaneness was clear. But the ensuing decades had shattered that illusion: invoking humanitarianism did not settle the debate or establish moral clarity. The malleability of the shared cultural sensibility of humaneness sapped attempts to apply it in a univocal way; humanitarianism splintered, rather than forged, moral unity. After decades of debating, the prospect of resolution only retreated further from view. Yet neither side could escape the rhetoric; the debate had made the issue of humaneness too important to the slavery question. Antislavery authors drew on the workings of sympathy to inspire moral outrage at slavery, but their opponents relied on the same theories to defend slavery. To antislavery writers freedom meant release from torture, but their proslavery opponents called liberty the "Freedom to Starve."[1] Proslavery denials spurred antislavery attacks; antislavery assaults in turn spawned denials and counterattacks. When Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1851–52, she hoped the novel would break through this

spiral of charge and countercharge. Stowe succeeded in turning Americans' attention to the emotional sufferings of slaves, but her book stoked the fires of long-standing debates over the role of imagination and emotions in sympathy. Rather than breaking through the debate over the humaneness of slavery, the book escalated it.

On both sides the intertwining of the two issues and the heightened rhetoric created a series of dilemmas. Both sides struggled with ambivalence within their own camps about the rhetoric of humaneness and its implications. Doubts nagged antislavery activists about their reliance on the imagery of physical cruelty to evoke sympathy for slaves. Would a kinder, gentler slavery really pass moral muster? Should activists pay so much attention to the bodies of slaves, to the detriment of focusing on the hearts and souls of enslaved human beings? For slavery's defenders, too, the need to resort to ever-stronger claims of benevolence took its toll. If slavery's justice depended on humaneness, how could they deal with slavery's admittedly harsher elements: separating families, the necessity of physical punishments, and its origins in the cruel slave trade? Did admitting the inhumanity of elements of slavery undermine the whole institution? How could proslavery polemicists reconcile their claims that nature designed blacks for slavery with their condemnations of the slave trade? On both sides activists radicalized unevenly; polemicists divided over how to answer these questions and devised strategies at cross-purposes. As the rhetoric on both sides escalated, internal contradictions proliferated. Humanitarianism generated far more controversy than it settled.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, Emotions, and Sympathy

In 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ignited a firestorm. Harriet Beecher Stowe's widely read novel inspired outrage—at slavery or at Stowe's mendacious imagination, depending on the reader's view of slavery. The novel drew effusive praise and execration, in part because it fit neatly into long-standing moral disputes. Even as the book sparked new controversies, its power came from investing conventional arguments with new, emotional import. Genre mattered. Stowe used the style and formulas of sentimental novels to rewrite antislavery rhetoric.[2] Yet the same sentimental formulas that made her arguments so appealing to antislavery readers also fit neatly into proslavery stereotypes of antislavery argumentation. Scoffers had long denounced distant

antislavery sympathy as no more effective than the sympathy of teary-eyed novel readers; skeptics likewise discounted antislavery rhetoric as the flights of overwrought imaginations. Morality, critics charged, depended on active benevolence, not Stowe's emotive sentimentalism. While some readers wept in sympathy with Stowe's suffering victims, other readers found ready rebuttals in proslavery traditions.

The novel struck at the heart of proslavery claims of humaneness by treating all slaveholders—even supposedly humane ones—as participants in a cruel system. Antislavery writers had insisted time and again that humane slaveholders—even if they existed—could not protect enslaved blacks from the system's cruelties. But rather than excoriating all slaveholders for personal cruelty, Stowe's novel cast some kindhearted individuals as slaveholders. She portrayed two slaveholders so sympathetically that, as Lydia Maria Child reported, a Maryland senator mistakenly praised Stowe: "*She* knows how to *feel* for a man, when he is obliged to sell a good honest slave!"[3] Tom's story began in Kentucky under "the mildest form" of slavery. But Tom's status as a slave counteracted the kindness of two benevolent owners; he ultimately died from a cruel whipping at the hands of Simon Legree.[4] Financial woes led the benevolent Shelbys to sell Tom, and Augustine St. Clare's death resulted in Tom's sale to Legree. Antislavery writers had long pointed out that financial duress and death left even the best-treated slaves vulnerable to the cruelty inseparable from the system, but now people listened.

Moreover, regardless of physical cruelty, even supposedly humane slaveholders shared in the system's emotional cruelty by buying or selling slaves. By making family life central to her story, Stowe produced a novel that reflected and reinforced a growing emphasis on the emotional pain of slaves and the cruelty of separating families. The plot turned on the separation of Uncle Tom from his family—despite his owners' benevolence—and the threatened separation of Eliza from her son. The prospect of losing a family member meant that enslaved blacks willingly suffered enormous physical pain to escape from even a kind owner.[5] Slavery's "most dreadful part," one character remarked, was "its outrages on the feelings and affections,—the separating of families."[6] Heartrending tales of sundered families were hardly new, but they played an expanding role in antislavery rhetoric in the 1850s, due in part to Stowe and in part to the broader culture's romanticization of family life. Such accounts increasingly moved to the forefront to show that

slaves suffered from the cruelty of slavery. In 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* culminated in Tom's death by cruel whipping, but emotional pain moved the plot. Indeed, Stowe's depictions of physical cruelty called for a new kind of sympathy with sufferers: an entrance into the interior life of enslaved victims. White antislavery rhetoric had, for decades, focused on the bodies of slaves rather than on their hearts, minds, or souls. Stowe staged a spectacle of slave suffering to elicit an emotional response in her readers, but she used slaves' imagined emotions, not simply their scars, to evoke it.

Even more strikingly, Stowe departed from antislavery conventions by shifting attention from slaves' pain to their suffering, to the experience of enduring that pain. Stowe did not abandon the imagery of bloody whippings, but her depiction of the death of Uncle Tom contrasted sharply with typical white activists' descriptions of torn and bloody bodies. For decades abolitionists had eagerly depicted blacks as helpless victims, focusing on the pain and the wrongness of inflicting that pain. Stowe, however, portrayed Uncle Tom as a martyr-victim who did not simply endure pain, but who willingly, patiently embraced suffering and found meaning in that suffering. Physical pain transformed into redemptive suffering; the helpless victim became a patient martyr. Stowe departed from antislavery habits by making an enslaved man a martyr or Christ-figure; despite abolitionists' fascination with martyrological imagery, they persistently reserved it for themselves. But for Uncle Tom, Christ's "suffering changed an instrument of torture, degradation and shame, into a symbol of glory, honor, and immortal life."[7] Cruelty failed; Tom's sufferings transformed into a moment of triumph over slavery, his refusal to let Legree own his soul.[8] Stowe invoked abhorrence of cruelty, but she relied on undercurrents of residual cultural admiration for patient, Christian, innocent sufferers.

The emotional and spiritual never replaced the corporeal in antislavery rhetoric, but Stowe mediated sympathy for sufferers through domesticity and sentimental Christianity, not the body alone. She and other writers recognized that family separations could elicit sympathy from white parents who hated the thought of parting with their own children, even temporarily. Still, neither she nor others could escape the corporeal nature of antislavery rhetoric; countless polemicists had long described emotional and sexual violence with the imagery of physical cruelty. They continued to do so in the 1850s. One black abolitionist denounced the system "which lacerates their hearts."[9]

Lacerated backs remained standard fare, but lacerated hearts mattered because proslavery writers responded much less adeptly to arguments about family life.

Even as antislavery writers applauded Stowe's sentimental sympathy, the novel converted few southern whites. A Southerner with mild qualms about slavery but deeper hatred of northern "interference" griped that the book produced thousands of converts to the view that slavery was a "blessing."[10] He exaggerated, but the novel did polarize; writers spilled gallons of ink in pamphlets, reviews, articles, and even counternovels proclaiming the benevolence of slavery.[11] Relatives and friends inundated slaveholders with letters asking whether the details were true. One Alabamian responded to his antislavery niece with a twelve-page letter denouncing Stowe's ignorance of the South.[12] The novel inspired not conversion but reassertions of benevolence.

The same qualities that made the novel so successful and innovative also neatly fed into older patterns of proslavery criticism; the novel reinvigorated a furious feud over the character of sympathy and the roles of imagination, fiction, and fact in stimulating it. The book elicited immediate outrage over its fictional character and Stowe's "morbid and heated imagination."[13] Countless writers denounced audiences for spilling "tears over the imaginary wrongs of a theatrical 'Uncle Tom.' "[14] Not only had Stowe made up the entire story, but she did not know what she was talking about. She inspired pity through deception and a misinformed imagination. One proslavery writer likened her to an abolitionist who had mistaken a pair of pantaloons for an emaciated slave begging for freedom through a barred window.[15]

Stowe, like so many antislavery polemicists before her, responded by trying to prove the factuality of her claims. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, though a fictional narrative, was a "mosaic of facts" constructed from real incidents, a claim echoed by other antislavery fiction writers. But criticism pushed Stowe to write the *Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin"* in 1854 to provide the facts behind her fiction.[16] Proslavery attacks forced abolitionists to prove, time and again, the veracity of their claims and perhaps even to rethink their tactics. A study of slave codes, William Jay enthused, resisted accusations that Stowe's novel could not: "the book is not only true, but it is *unquestionably* true."[17] Yet such assertions were needed precisely because proslavery writers succeeded in raising those questions. Stowe's novel reinvigorated a cyclical battle over the facts of cruelty.

Not only did the novel fall into a long-standing feud over the authenticity

of antislavery claims; it stirred the embers in an old debate over the role of novels and sympathy in moral formation. Novels, moral philosophers worried, undermined moral formation by detaching the emotional and active dimensions of sympathy.[18] It is probably no coincidence that it was 1852 when a Princeton student sneered at "melancholists" who, in the midst of comforts, "love to linger over scenes of woe."[19] Debates about fiction both fueled and were fueled by debates about the character and functioning of sympathy, an already fiercely contested concept.

Sympathy divided Americans, but the reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* further politicized the meaning of sympathy, particularly over its relationship to sentimentalism and emotions. Should the head or the heart guide sympathy?[20] Proslavery writers had long accused their opponents of engaging in an emotional sympathy without action; now, even as slavery's defenders acknowledged the importance of emotion, they stressed that correct action depended on "judgment and justice" checking "an excess of sympathy." Mere feeling could lead one astray.[21] Louisa McCord went further, contrasting "God-given reason and common-sense humanity" with the "nauseous froth-scum of sickly philanthropy."[22] Yet sneering at the sentimental did not typically mean abandoning either sympathy or humanitarianism—or even emotion. Edward Pringle, a Harvard graduate, would "allow Mrs. Stowe no monopoly of feeling, or even of sentiment (though the word is growing disreputable)."[23] Rather, one must train one's emotions and sympathy. The overwrought emotions and flighty sentimentalism of novel readers destroyed true sympathy by "weeping over imaginary wrongs and laughing at real distress."[24]

Crucially, proslavery writers invoked the moral superiority of an active sympathy over the emotional, passive sympathy of novel readers, which stunted moral development. Novel-induced sympathy destroyed the capacity for *active* benevolence. Such arguments tapped into older claims that sympathy functioned best locally; distant sympathy, mediated through the imagination, lacked force. Antislavery activists admitted the dilemma. In Stowe's novel only the physical presence of a suffering runaway could convince Senator Bird of the wrongness of the Fugitive Slave Law; sympathy lacked force in the abstract.[25] Stowe's opponents turned this dynamic against her. Furthermore, novel readers' sympathy was not only weak but also morally destructive. Sentimental fiction, as a Pennsylvanian at Princeton explained in 1852, detached the pleasures of moral feeling from attendant duties: relieving real sufferers.[26] At the College of South Carolina in Columbia, James Henley

Thornwell fumed that fiction aroused sympathy without action, for readers' sympathy could rest on no "real object of pity." Readers could not respond with action. Instead of acquiring the habits of active benevolence, they learned to view suffering with indifference.[27] In 1853, with Stowe's book on the minds of many readers, Thornwell taught his students that "the tendency of sentimentalism to harden the heart is obvious." Sentimental readers delighted in emotions but ignored real sufferers.[28]

Proslavery polemics drew heavily on moral-philosophical suspicions of sentimental literature and imagined suffering, particularly when these combined with a long-standing emphasis on local sympathy. Distant novel readers lacked the capacity for moral action, which relied on the physical presence of real sufferers. Vision—not imagination—set sympathy into motion. Slaveholders who saw slaves on a daily basis sympathized with them; critics who only imagined the experiences of enslaved laborers could neither truly sympathize nor soothe pain. Edward Pringle explained that slaveholders, who saw slaves regularly, would relieve any suffering that existed because they would "be moved to pity by the sight of the misery." Northern manufacturers, in contrast, lacked that vision; a manufacturer might never even realize the suffering he had caused, "because there is no visible claim upon him."[29] Even moderate critics of slavery criticized distant sympathy as useless if not dangerous. In 1853 Charles Blackford, a University of Virginia student, explained to his mother, Mary Blackford, a Virginia colonizationist and critic of slavery, that he would not migrate north. Contact with slavery would not corrupt him, despite her worries. On the contrary, the sight of slavery would push him to action; in the North, he explained, he would easily forget what he did not see, and he could do nothing to help.[30] Charles later criticized philanthropists who "can picture woes, but cannot show how to relieve them, they weep and are satisfied."[31]

Proslavery writers linked physical presence, moral responsibility, and sympathy to prove the moral superiority of Southerners over selfish, novel-reading Northerners. In contrast to the hardening sympathy of novelists stood the true sympathy of slaveholders; slaveholders exercised benevolent responsibility and *acted* on compassion. Proslavery claims grew grandiose. Some defenders of slavery even argued that the responsibility of owning slaves improved the character of slaveholders. Far from turning owners into barbaric monsters, slaveholding civilized them.[32] William Horner, a southern lawyer, theorized to a slaveholding friend in 1855 that slavery improved the

character by offering opportunities to display "the feelings of pity[,] sympathy, authority & suavity."[33] According to George Fitzhugh in 1849, slavery exercised the affections and taught slaveholders to look after the needs of others, making them "better husbands, better fathers, better friends, and better neighbors" than Northerners.[34]

"A Species of Opposition Which It Has Been Difficult to Meet"

As proslavery writers showed adeptness in using the language of sympathy, proslavery resistance caught abolitionists in a dilemma. Did it make sense to persist in a strategy that not only provoked intense resistance but also pinned the wrong of slavery on the treatment of enslaved blacks rather than their status as slaves? Did focusing on bodies divert attention from the moral wrong of turning a human being into property to be bought and sold? Many abolitionists suspected the danger of the strategy. Yet the dynamics of the debate tugged them back into that approach; proslavery attacks on the fevered imaginations of antislavery writers inspired activists to insist on the *reality* of cruelty. Despite the risks, humanitarianism proved an alluring language. The danger of surrendering humanitarianism to proslavery trumped the dangers of using it; despite their doubts, antislavery writers flung themselves, time and again, into a cycle of proving slavery's cruelty anew.

Reservations about emphasizing cruelty plagued slavery's critics. Did it really matter how slaveholders treated the people they enslaved, as long as slaveholders denied them freedom and autonomy? It did not, Ephraim Peabody concluded in 1851. Slavery denied human beings the possibility of self-development, holding them in "a condition half-way between the animal and the man." The Boston Unitarian's claim reflected the growing emphasis on the importance of self-culture and developing one's own capacities. A concern over the denial of the enslaved person's humanity—regardless of treatment—extended beyond the neighborhood of Boston.[35] Slaveholders, claimed Lyman Johnson, a Presbyterian minister in Illinois, deserved no more credit for feeding enslaved laborers well than did cannibals who sought well-fed victims. Once slaveholders denied human beings their rights, they could do nothing more; even whipping someone to death did not matter because the slave lacked even the most basic of human rights.[36] Slaveholders not only failed to live up to their own claims of benevolent treatment, but their claims to control other human beings—even for supposedly benevolent purposes—were evil.

By the 1850s, reform movements more broadly stressed the moral importance of autonomy and challenged the principles of dependency. Such criticisms had a long legacy, but they gained intensity as antislavery radicalized. As slaveholders more stridently asserted their humaneness toward dependent slaves, more polemicists aimed their fire at the ideal of dependence rather than simply mocking the gap between proslavery ideology and slaveholders' behavior.[37]

For some antislavery polemicists the danger of appealing to humaneness lay in its focus on the body rather than the moral, spiritual, or intellectual state of enslaved blacks. In 1855 Charles Grandison Parsons suggested that antislavery rhetoric often missed the point: people felt sympathy "when the *slave* is starved, scourged, tortured; but it is not so much because his *manhood* is degraded as because the *animal* is suffering." Slavery's physical cruelty did not prove the wrongness of slavery, and it directed the attention at the wrong wrongs.[38] For other writers, qualms about focusing on treatment extended (though with less force) even to the emotional cruelty of slavery, especially the separating of families. No matter how kind or unkind the treatment, slavery's worst evil lay elsewhere.[39]

Yet criticizing the rhetoric proved easier than escaping it. Even if they agreed with Johnson that denying rights was the ultimate abuse, many activists would have blanched at his statement that starving, whipping, and killing did not matter.[40] Additionally, most polemicists insisted that cruelty was central to slavery; slavery could not survive without cruelty. Even as Parsons insisted that cruelty did not prove the wrong of slavery, he insisted that slavery depended on "all the cruelties and the tortures." He described, extensively, implements of torture and their use: thumbscrews, gags, chains, whips of various kinds, paddles, and the treadmill. Parsons even included the details of someone being burnt alive.[41] For all his concern about misdirected sympathies, he appealed to them. Activists denied the relevance of cruelty while dwelling on it.

Numerous activists insisted that the true wrong of slavery was the theft of liberty or the dehumanization of slavery rather than cruelty. Yet those same activists amassed details of cruelty. Mattie Griffith, a white Kentuckian waiting until she came of age to free the slaves she inherited, wrote a fictional *Autobiography of a Female Slave* in 1856, which brought her attention from abolitionists.[42] She explained to John Gorham Palfrey that she had opposed slavery since childhood, but she "took a merely human view of it," focusing

on cruelties: "the whip, lash, the broken family ties." As she grew older, she recognized that slavery reduced a human being to "a *thing,* a chattel." This recognition inspired "a new and deeper horror" of slavery.[43] One might thus expect her book to focus on the chattel principle rather than treatment. Instead, Griffith wrote what Lydia Maria Child described as "a book of *unmitigated* horrors."[44] Child did not exaggerate. Griffith packed her novel with sexualized whippings at the hands of lascivious men who found music in "the cries of human suffering."[45] In the voice of Ann, a slave, she described herself being stripped naked and whipped with a brine-dipped cowhide.[46] When Ann resisted rape, her two-hundred-lash punishment left her "one mass of filth and clotted gore."[47] Cruelty might be "the merely human view," but Griffith found it a compelling view.

For many activists the practical needs of the debate and long-standing habits overcame theoretical concerns. As humaneness became crucial to morality, criticisms of cruelty appealed more widely than calls for racial equality or denunciations of patriarchy, both among activists and among those whom they hoped to persuade. More activists used the language of humaneness—and more readers took criticisms of cruelty seriously. Focusing on cruelty allowed moderate Americans to avoid sticky issues of equality or human rights; moral concern about cruelty, after all, extended even to animals. Even though Americans fought over the meaning of humaneness, humaneness itself garnered widespread support. Humaneness seemed attractive precisely because its meaning seemed self-evident and untainted by ideology—even though ideological rifts had opened in the meaning of humaneness.

More crucially, many activists concluded that stressing physical cruelty, though dangerous and misleading, was better than accepting proslavery claims that slavery was benevolent. The smell of burning flesh or fetid prisons, the shrieks of tortured slaves, and the sight of mangled bodies too compellingly refuted proslavery claims of benevolence to resist. Habit also reinforced this focus on cruelty. Activists had cut their polemical teeth on detailed, concrete narratives of fiendish cruelty, and abstract moral arguments seemed less compelling than concrete details. By the nineteenth century, even sermons became increasingly anecdotal; abstract arguments often gave way to concrete examples and stories.[48] Fears and training thus worked together to reinforce a language that many polemicists had grown to suspect but not escape.

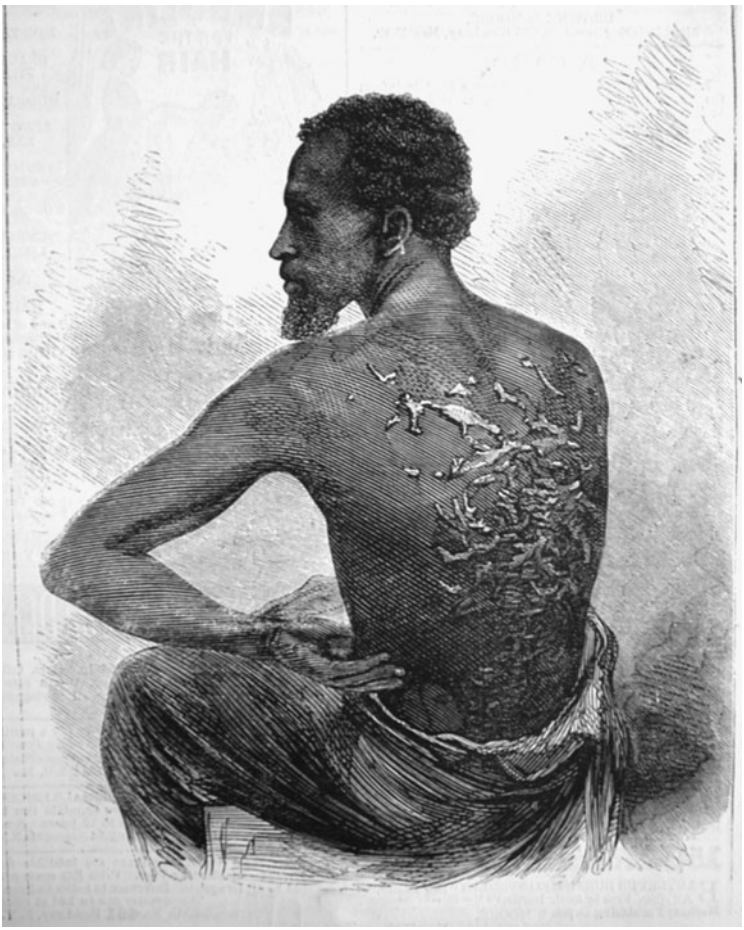
Abstract denunciations of slavery also risked alienating a crucial constituency: those who accepted slavery in the abstract but not its actual practice in the nineteenth-century South. The distinction mattered, especially to the many Christians who interpreted the Bible as tolerant, if not supportive, of slavery. Proslavery writers persuaded many Americans that the Bible, literally (and properly) interpreted, sanctioned slavery: one could escape this conclusion only through Unitarianism or infidelity. On a theological level the problem proved thorny for most Protestants. But conservative Protestants and Catholics distinguished between intrinsic evils and evils arising out of particular circumstances. Charles Hodge, an influential northern Presbyterian theologian, argued that abolitionism made its "grand mistake" in failing to distinguish between slavery in the abstract and its concrete forms: the Bible did not condemn all slavery, just its cruel forms. The issue thus turned on whether southern slavery fit biblical precepts.[49] Therein lay an opportunity and challenge. Critics might not win the exegetical battle, but by focusing on torn flesh and torn families, they could deny that the Bible supported modern slavery. Some antislavery activists rejected the claim that the Bible supported slavery even in the abstract, but activists had to convince those who wondered, suspected, or concluded that the Bible did. Proving that the Bible did not sanction American slavery thus depended on showing the misery, debauchery, and infidelity accompanying slavery. Activists could more easily persuade people that slavery did not fit biblical norms than that they (and countless Christians over the centuries) misread the Bible.[50]

And proslavery claims demanded a response. Writers had responded to proslavery claims of benevolence before, but that made little difference if Americans had not read works such as *American Slavery as It Is* but had heard proslavery arguments. James Redpath lamented that Northerners so often heard that enslaved blacks were well treated that they began to believe it, simply because "what we hear often, we at length believe."[51] William Goodell explained the need for his own study of slave laws by pointing out that abolitionists had "encountered a species of opposition which it has been difficult to meet": accusations of exaggerating isolated incidents and "abuses" of an otherwise benevolent system. Such sophistry had led to "unwise and unfortunate concessions."[52] Rather than conceding, antislavery polemicists sought new evidence.

They found this new evidence in the "humane office" of the photograph; in 1863 activists began circulating two photographs featuring the whipped

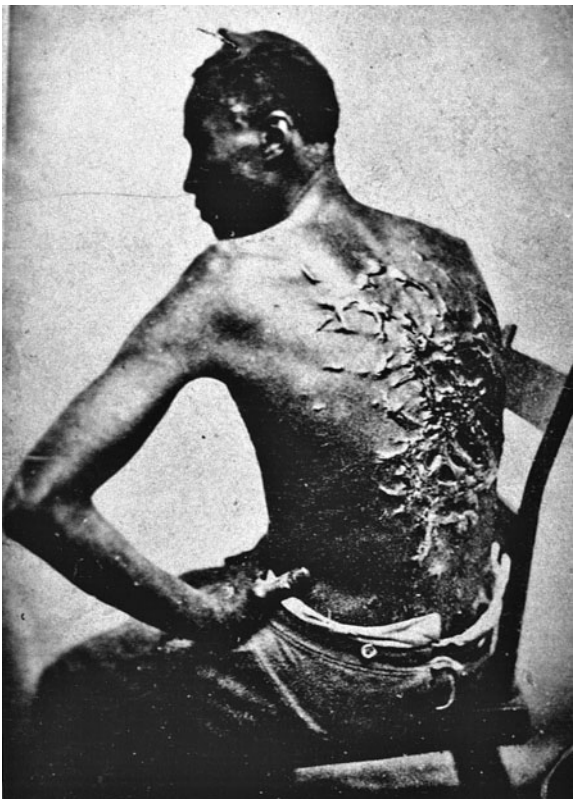
back of an enslaved man.[53] The polemical value of the pictures quickly trumped doubts about such strategies. The more famous photograph was of a bearded man, whose back bore a web of tough ridges left by the whip. A Union army surgeon sent it to his brother, suggesting that he show it to "any one who talks about the *humane manner* in which the slaves are treated."[54] Pictures, slavery's critics insisted, did not lie; the photograph provided inescapable proof of slavery's cruelty. The picture, enthused the *New York Independent,* was better than Stowe's novel "because it tells the story to the eye."[55] Vision sparked sympathy more effectively than any imagined narrative. The photograph also seemingly promised truth untinged by fancy. The visual proof of cruelty would strike dread in the hearts of slavery's defenders. The *Liberator* reported gleefully that a proslavery man purchased the picture and tore it to shreds, assuming that he held the only copy; abolitionists dreamed of printing hundreds of thousands of copies.[56] Quickly, McAllister and Brothers of Philadelphia reproduced the picture as a carte-de-visite for mass distribution; Massachusetts and British publishers followed suit.[57] Even more people encountered "Gordon's" story in *Harper's Weekly,* where his image appeared as an engraving on July 4, 1863, in an article entitled "A Typical Negro."[58] Antislavery Northerners used the image to rally public opinion against the South, in the midst of a war that, in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation, promised to end slavery in most states.

What mattered about the picture was that it proved the universal cruelty of slavery. When abolitionists circulated and publicized the image, they made sure to include details about the man's life. Details reinforced the aura of veracity; the carte-de-visite dated the whipping to October 1862 (even though *Harper's Weekly* dated it to Christmas 1862).[59] Precision mattered more than accuracy. The *New York Independent* described the man as a "New Orleans slave."[60] *Harper's* explained that Gordon escaped from slavery in Mississippi, had entered the army, and had revealed his scars only under inspection for service; New Orleans photographers then captured the image. Yet, beyond the utility of such details for proving the reality of cruelty, the details of Gordon's life mattered little to *Harper's* and to many abolitionists, who were more interested in the back than the person. He was actually neither from Mississippi nor New Orleans; Gordon from Mississippi was really Peter from a cotton plantation in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, on the banks of the Atchafalaya River. The famous portrait of the "typical negro" had a twin, a less common image. In this 1863 photograph sat a man, in a nearly



A Typical Negro. The accompanying story in *Harper's Weekly* identified this man as Gordon, who escaped from slavery in Mississippi. For *Harper's*, Gordon mattered far more as evidence than as an individual. The article, "A Typical Negro," treated Gordon's back as a symbol of the universal and typical cruelty of slavery. See the article "A Cruel Punishment," *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1863. Courtesy of Brown University Library.

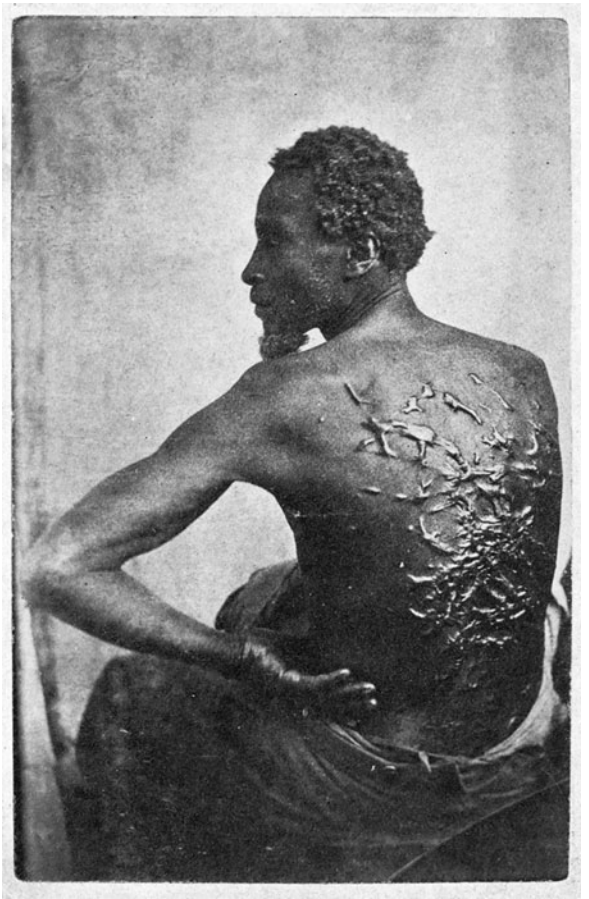
identical pose. Like "Gordon," his back faced the camera, he showed only half his face, and he placed his left hand on his hip.[61] But unlike Gordon, he had shorter hair and no beard, and a caption identified him as "Peter," a slave from Atchafalaya, Louisiana. The caption ended by asserting the authenticity: "The very words of poor Peter, taken as he sat for the picture."[62] But "Peter"



"Peter." The caption to this photograph, taken in 1863, identified the man as Peter, who escaped from a cotton plantation belonging to John Lyons of St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. "Peter," however, is the same man as "Gordon," despite the contradictory accounts accompanying the two images. National Archives Photo 165-JT-230.

was a shaved Gordon; the intricate web of ridges followed the same pattern, and the pictures shared a date.[63]

The man's real identity ultimately did not matter to the debate. Abolitionists treated his scars as the very emblem of slavery's cruelty, written in the flesh. The man's back was, as the *Independent* argued, "the type of the slave system, and of the society that sustains it"; *Harper's* labeled him a "Typical Negro."[64] The *Liberator* referred to him simply as "the Louisiana slave." Gordon (or Peter) mattered more as evidence than as a person. His flesh, not his personal account, dominated the image and accompanying texts. His scars



The Scourged Back. This famous version of the photograph, taken in 1863, was circulated as a carte-de-visite and did not name the man. The photograph provided the model for the *Harper's Weekly* engraving of "Gordon." Slavery's critics mass-produced and distributed the image, which they saw as irrefutable proof of slavery's ubiquitous cruelty. Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 9, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library.

even inspired poetry.[65] The man's value lay in his typicality, not his uniqueness. When abolitionists circulated the photograph as a carte-de-visite, they entitled it simply *The Scourged Back*, without even the man's name. His pose—his back to the camera, his face to the side—obscured his personality. In *Harper's* an accompanying story briefly (and vaguely) related his escape, yet the story focused neither on his enlistment nor his own suffering in slavery but the "typical" cruelty of slavery.[66] His back lent credibility to the article's claims of "common" treatment of enslaved blacks: beating them with handsaws or dropping hot embers onto their backs.[67] Peter/Gordon's personal experiences were subordinated to a narrative about cruelty to the "typical negro." His individuality mattered to establish the photograph's authenticity, but otherwise he could have been any other slave.[68]

Universalizing Peter/Gordon's back made sense in antislavery circles. The photographs ostensibly spoke for themselves, but they grew from deep roots in antislavery discourse. Activists had long been obsessed with the scarred backs of slaves. The photograph was valuable precisely because it proved what antislavery activists had been saying for decades. Nine years before his image appeared, Solomon Northup, a free black kidnapped into slavery, had described a slave's back "covered with long welts, intersecting each other like net work."[69] In antislavery rhetoric the backs of enslaved laborers, hidden from casual observers, bore evidence of slavery's true cruelty and the rottenness of southern culture.[70] Exposing the scourged backs made slaveholders' inhumanity visible, just as pictures of light-skinned, rosy-cheeked children exposed slaveholders' sexual violence.[71] The seeming clarity of the photographs refuted proslavery sneers about fiction; the bodies themselves became "resistless" evidence of slaveholders' cruelty.[72] Slavery's critics had long seen in slaves' backs testimony against slaveholders' false pretensions to philanthropy; these testified now to the need to defeat the southern armies.

Such images—especially in the heat of an escalating civil war—offered temptations that few antislavery polemicists could resist. But the images reinforced an emphasis on cruelty and the bodies of slaves rather than the experiences of the enslaved person. The polemical value of such evidence squelched antislavery qualms about focusing on treatment rather than arguments from human rights, equality, or the wrongness of treating a human being as property. Activists' reservations notwithstanding, the dynamic of response and counterresponse would not let the rhetoric die. Antislavery arguments could not develop in isolation; activists had to consider their

opposition. Old habits and polemical needs conspired to keep physical cruelty central to the case against slavery.

"I Know They Must Be Whipped Sometimes"

Just as antislavery thought shifted under the weight of the debate, proslavery conceptions of slavery took form and evolved within the context of an intensifying battle. In turn, these evolving conceptions of slavery in the public debate affected how slaveholders understood their day-to-day practices of slaveholding. By the 1850s, slavery's defenders depended heavily on the idea that slavery was benevolent, but these claims meshed uneasily with slaveholders' struggles to maintain discipline, especially discipline resting on violence. Public idealizations of slavery fit awkwardly with the lived institution of slavery, which involved not only slaveholders but also enslaved people who could resist, manipulate, or accommodate slaveholders' demands. But the world that slaves and slaveholders made together nevertheless operated within a broader world of moral assumptions and argumentation. Slaveholders, like most people, wanted to believe themselves moral, and being moral now required being humane. Publicly and privately, slaveholders claimed humaneness. Shifts in moral thinking did not force individuals to alter their behavior, but these shifts did force them to develop ways to reconcile their behavior and ideals.

The worlds of public debate and private actions could not be neatly separated for slavery's defenders. Claims of benevolence surrounded slaveholders. Sermons, plantation manuals, and books advised them on their humane duties to slaves; private letters, diaries, and plantation records echoed this commitment to viewing slavery as benevolent. Publicly, proslavery rhetoric stressed the happiness of enslaved blacks, and in private many slaveholders assured themselves of their own kindness and their slaves' love. Letters reported that "the Servants are all well and send their love."[73] A South Carolinian recorded in his diary his satisfaction at the "delightful feeling" between slaves and their owners, when "each strives to satisfy the other." He basked in contentment, adding that "it is a genuine satisfaction to know that you are contributing to the comfort—happiness—and eternal welfare of human beings!!"[74]

As in previous decades, reform literature not only prescribed benevolent behavior but also strengthened slaveholders' self-image as benevolent. In

1851 slaveholders could read *Duties of Masters to Servants*, three prizewinning essays instructing owners in a now-familiar litany of duties: to provide comfortable clothing, plentiful food, warm beds, cozy shelters, and sharp tools to make slaves' lives happier and easier.[75] In 1856, when William Smith wrote his *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery*, a moral-philosophical defense of slavery, he included a long chapter on the "Duty of Masters to Slaves." The book, he explained, would be "inexcusably defective" without it.[76] Slaveholders in Richmond bought fill-in-the-blank record books for their plantations containing pages of advice, as well as rules and regulations, for plantations. Slaveholders' own record books told them to show kindness to slaves and make slaves comfortable and happy.[77] Elaborate guidelines specified hours of work, food and clothing allowances, and rules and punishments.[78] Some slaveholders wrote their own rules in plantation record books.[79] The reform literature idealized the slaveholder-slave relationship as one of friendship, kindness, and mutual affection. If slaveholders followed the advice, a slave would, as A. T. Holmes claimed, live in "the happy consciousness that his *master is his friend*."[80] Slaveholders would be amply rewarded for their humaneness by "the contentment, cheerfulness, and comfortable condition" of their "servants."[81] Most importantly, enslaved laborers would be submissive and docile, and good order would reign.

Yet, as slaveholders knew, slaves were not always docile. Slavery required, as critics often pointed out, some punishments. How, then, could slave owners describe slavery as humane? Publicly, defenders of slavery suggested that the limited pain of discipline prevented greater pain; discipline protected enslaved blacks from themselves. Whipping resulted in healthier and more reasonable behavior, or it saved blacks from lives of idle dissipation. Occasionally, theorists took this to extremes. Edward Josiah Stearns claimed that "whipping acts as a counter irritation, and thus as a sedative, soothing the nerves, and allaying the excitement of the passions."[82] Louisiana ethnologist Samuel Cartwright argued that blacks breathed in less oxygen than whites. They thus lacked energy, so whipping actually increased their capacity for pleasure. By exacting muscular exertion, whipping "expands the lungs, vitalizes the blood, and wakes him up to a sense of pleasure and happiness." Whipping would thus "transform the torpid, unhappy tenant of the wilderness into a rational and happy thing—the happiest being on earth."[83] Pain served slaves' own greater good.[84] Publicly and privately, slaveholders insisted that whipping protected enslaved blacks from each other. Cartwright joined a host of slaveholders who

complained that black parents abused or neglected their children; whites needed to protect enslaved children.[85] Other slaveholders claimed that punishments protected slaves from spousal violence.[86]

Punishments, reformers insisted, were necessary, and the literature gave careful instructions on the proper way to discipline slaves. Discipline should both correct offenders and deter future offenses. *Certain* punishment worked better than severity. One should never punish—or even threaten to do so—in a state of passion. Such passionate punishments were "mean and unmanly," and mastery of slaves depended on self-mastery.[87] Reformers cautioned against showing any hint of pleasure in punishing.[88] But nor should one fall prey to false humanity and "leave the patient uncured" of misbehavior. Inappropriately lenient punishments were actually less humane than appropriately stern ones; the enslaved person suffered less pain in the short term from a mild whipping, but an overly lenient punishment did not serve its purpose. Thus, slaves suffered without deriving the benefit of the proper lesson, which ensured that they would suffer more in the future, whether from punishments or the natural consequences of misbehavior.[89] Reform literature thus gave slaveholders a way to view themselves as benevolent, even as they whipped and disciplined enslaved people.

Despite public and private claims that slaveholders acted humanely, the practical day-to-day operation of slavery strained this self-image. In public rhetoric slaveholders easily claimed benevolence; in private such claims proved more difficult. James Henry Hammond morosely reflected that the high death rate on his plantation made him look like "a monster of inhumanity." But those deaths caused him endless "anxiety and suffering."[90] Hammond was obsessed with the idea of his own benevolent mastery, and the refusal of his enslaved laborers to support his self-image infuriated him.[91]

As slaveholders increasingly insisted on their kindness, they struggled to understand discipline in terms of humaneness. In 1853 Richard Eppes, a Richmond-area planter, reminded himself that all discipline depended on the possibility of whipping as a last resort: if enslaved blacks discovered that a "master will not whip, there is an end to all management, all the talking, giving good advice will effect nothing." Benevolence depended on the real, if veiled, threat of violence. Eppes prided himself on controlling slaves through "good advice" and rewards, but he also devised elaborate rules and regulations with clearly specified physical punishments.[92] The slaveholder who refused to punish "crimes," he concluded, courted personal disaster and

became a public nuisance.[93] Yet Eppes reassured himself that only necessity impelled him to the duty of whipping. In 1859 he lamented that one enslaved man, Bins, refused to reform. His whipping "gave me more pain than him," and Bins's intransigence meant that Eppes's "time & pains were thrown away."[94]

Slaveholders insisted to themselves that they punished only reluctantly and that the stubborn refusal of slaves to do their duties drove slaveholders to punishment. A Kentuckian, Robert Breckinridge, told his wife that he found it "unspeakably painful" to punish slaves, but their habitual disobedience "demanded it."[95] Recalcitrant slaves, as countless slaveholders griped, made kindness incredibly difficult. The "frailties of negro human nature," one slaveholder complained, demanded incredible patience.[96] In 1847 a slaveholder confided to James Henry Hammond that slaves were "so annoying and vexatious, especially when one has a conscientious desire to fulfill one's *duty* to them, as fellow creatures."[97] Kindness was a moral, but painful, duty: slaves, like children, failed to appreciate the onerous duties of their slaveholders in putting up with them.

Some slaveholders dealt with the tension between their humane professions and their day-to-day struggles by questioning their own fitness for the duties of slaveholding. One Alabamian considered selling her enslaved laborers for about $15,000 because of her "scruples about driving & pushing slaves & we all know that they will not make *much* without it (we have just had a great blow out with our overseer & turned him out for whipping unreasonably)."[98] Her scruples—likely exacerbated by the "blow out" with the overseer—did not extend to subjecting the slaves to another slaveholder who *would* get work done by whipping. Others who found whipping distasteful tried to overcome their feelings. The slaveholder who complained about his "annoying and vexatious" slaves also worried that he could not punish them coolly, as he knew the advice literature demanded. He could only overcome his aversion to striking another living thing by losing his temper. But, he lamented, "I know they must be whipped sometimes."[99]

Most slaveholders agreed that enslaved blacks "must be whipped sometimes," and they constructed their self-perception of benevolence around a belief that recalcitrant slaves truly deserved punishments. Many slaveholders saw themselves as establishing a moral, benign order that reflected the moral governance of the world, an order in which pain naturally followed vice. God willed human happiness, Everard Green Baker, a Mississippi cotton planter,

reflected in 1863; when human beings rejected that divine order, they brought suffering and ill health upon themselves. Baker mused that "our sufferings, mental & bodily are all brought on by our own wrong doings."[100] Nineteenth-century moral philosophy, also called moral science, treated the laws of morality not simply as divine commands but as laws of cause and effect.[101] Drunkenness and gluttony naturally brought pain. In 1851 Richard Eppes decided to cure Crocodile, one of his slaves and "a habitual drunkard." Eppes put ipecac in Crocodile's liquor, explaining in his diary that he intended "by association of ideas, to connect in his [Crocodile's] mind the odour of ardent spirits and vomit."[102] Eppes tried to teach his enslaved laborers the natural link between misdeeds and punishments. His rules linked punishments to the offense. For fighting and quarreling Eppes required offenders to whip each other. Male adulterers earned twenty lashes from the woman's husband for first offenses; the "seducer," however, whipped female adulterers fifteen times.[103] Eppes and many other slaveholders conceived of their regimes as reflecting God's moral governance; Octavius Porcher regularly prayed for divine guidance in disciplining his slaves.[104] As distasteful as pain might be, the association of immorality and natural pain reinforced their view that unruly slaves did not deserve sympathy.

The belief in slaveholders' benevolence even reinforced the idea that bad slaves deserved punishments. Slaveholders increasingly expected slaves to be grateful, docile, and happy, but many enslaved blacks refused to fit this mold. John Young Mason of Norfolk sold an enslaved man because the man responded neither to "kindness or severity."[105] When Jesse Bernard's mother was upset with him for whipping one of her slaves, he sent a lengthy explanatory letter to his sister: he hated to whip people, but "Nancy is a bad negro, and a negro as mean as she is has no claims on our sympathy."[106]

Many slaveholders drew careful lines between the good slave and the ungrateful, bad slave who "has no claims on our sympathy." Slaveholders strongly associated punishments with the characters of the enslaved offender; good slaves received kindness, whereas bad ones deserved punishment. When his niece asked Joseph Heacock of Alabama what he thought of the narrative of Solomon Northup (a free black kidnapped into slavery in Louisiana), Heacock wrote that runaways deceived abolitionists. He had never read the book, but a lying runaway, he griped, "shows the marks of the lash" and "the scoundrel is never even asked why he got the lash, but is, pityed,

Nursed & caressed like a persecuted saint."[107] A scarred back revealed the wickedness of the slave, not the owner.

Slaveholders' conviction of benevolence thus encouraged punishments. Enslaved blacks were supposed to return the benevolence of their owners or overseers with gratitude, cheerfulness, and docility. The refusal of some blacks to play those roles upset many slaveholders, who persistently grumbled about the ingratitude of bad slaves.[108] When Keziah Brevard found out what her slaves really thought of her, she fumed about their ingratitude: "the Lord punishes those who are not thankful for mercies—I think Dolly has been very ungrateful." She pitied enslaved blacks, but she "treat[ed] *them* far better than they treat me."[109] When they failed to appreciate her benevolence, she quickly turned against them, even hoping that they would someday realize how much worse their fate could be.[110]

Ingratitude and wickedness in the face of benevolence took away a slave's right to compassion. Caleb Logan, a Kentucky slaveholder, explained to his wife that Beeny had stolen money: Beeny's "ingratitude & meanness" removed Logan's compunctions about selling her and separating her from her son. Logan "hated to take her child," but her "wickedness and obduracy" gradually reconciled him to it. Even then, he added that "the little creature is much better off" without his wicked mother, who corrupted his morals and health.[111] The refusal of some enslaved blacks to fit expectations of docility and gratitude placed them beyond sympathy. "Ingratitude" cost enslaved people what they should have been grateful for: their owners' benevolence.

Similarly, some slaveholders insisted that enslaved blacks benefited more from slavery than owners did. Many slaveholders wrote in their diaries that well-treated slaves did not know how good they had it and would discover it too late; the dislocation (and consequent opportunities for escaping) of the war exacerbated this tendency. When Frances Ewing's grandmother complained about an enslaved woman, Mary, Ewing told her to remind Mary that if she were hired out "she might have a hard time of it."[112] In 1863 Kate Foster of Natchez, Mississippi, fumed in her diary that one of her father's slaves had "gone fooled off by some old fool." She added that the "poor deluded creatures . . . will find out too late who were their best friends."[113]

Some slaveholders did recognize problems with brutality, but they did not turn against slavery. Priscilla Munnikhuysen Bond recorded with sadness in her diary that her father-in-law had, in a passion, unfairly whipped someone.

But Bond blamed not the system but her father-in-law; she thanked God that "my husband is not so heartless."[114] One Georgian, Narcissa Melissa Lawton, lamented her inability to save "poor Ben" from an "inhuman" overseer who whipped him to death. "No wonder," she mused in the early years of the Civil War, "we are punished by a just and avenging God for the injustice & Cruelty" to slaves. But Lawton, like Bond, did not denounce slavery. She took comfort that "there are some *human* hearts that can feel for others woe"—including her own. Her family had been "kind & indulgent."[115]

Even as some slaveholders questioned the humanity of fellow owners, other defenders of slavery insisted on slavery's unquestionable rectitude and absolute benevolence. As the war approached, proslavery unity showed signs of strain. Some, especially with the onset of war, called for reforms to purge slavery of "abuses."[116] Many others, however, grew ever more extreme in their claim that slavery was humane and benevolent. Some took their claims quite far. One defender argued in 1861 that "all Southern slaves are happy—none are melancholy, none tired of, or dissatisfied with life—none commit suicide, for none are underfed and over-worked—none suffering in the present, or apprehensive of the future. The only difficulty about slavery . . . is, is it the best form of society for the master race?"[117]

"Tender and Lasting Affection" and the Slave Trade

By the 1850s, proslavery activists—under the strain of the debate—turned to ever more radical arguments for the benevolence of slavery. Richard Henderson Rivers, a moral philosopher at Florence Wesleyan University (later the University of North Alabama), claimed that the owner-slave relation nourished "some of the most beautiful virtues of humanity" and "tender and lasting affection" between the parties.[118] Slavery, polemicists argued, combined a whole repertoire of protective mechanisms: social responsibility, self-interest, and humanity. Not only had God benevolently designed blacks for life in slavery, but the science of human nature also suggested that the bonds of property and affection harmonized to ensure the happiness of slaves. But proslavery radicalized unevenly. Radicalization split the most strident supporters of slavery from those who admitted some of its inhumane aspects, such as the violence of the African slave trade and the separation of families in both the foreign and domestic slave trades. Did the principles of self-interest and affection blend so effortlessly? The emphasis on affection as the

core of slavery cut against the reality that when slaveholders bought and sold slaves, they frequently split families, seemingly disregarding the affections of enslaved people. The workings of the slave trade highlighted the clash between slaveholders' self-interest and the bonds of affection supposedly engendered by slavery. How proslavery forces responded strained their unity. As radicals attempted to dismiss or deny all evils, they increasingly diverged from their more moderate counterparts.

Self-interest, many defenders of slavery claimed, helped guarantee humane treatment. Such writers took it for granted that social progress produced a poor, dependent class. How, then, could societies best deal with this class, as a matter of humanity, economics, and public safety? Did free labor or slave labor best ward off the ills of poverty?[119] Southerners led Americans in the study of political economy, but their economic views varied widely; some preferred classical economic theory and the free market, while others favored more government intervention.[120] But most shared the belief that the South organized labor more humanely and justly than did the North; slavery made the self-interest of the wealthy coincide with the welfare of the laboring, dependent class. Southerners debated whether self-interest guided all human action, but slavery's defenders typically agreed that self-interest served humanity by teaching people to protect and provide for laborers.[121]

Polemicists relied on the belief that humanity and interest worked in tandem. For slavery's defenders, interest and humanity merged in slavery; in northern wage labor, they worked at odds. In Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* sympathy (in its broad meaning as fellow-feeling with any passion) grounded both benevolence and economic transactions. Sympathy allowed buyers and sellers to recognize their separate interests as intersecting. It thus allowed the weaker party to appeal to self-interest rather than pity, thus ensuring the dignity of both parties; one could exchange rather than beg for benevolence.[122] Activists turned Smith's antislavery logic against itself by claiming wage labor thwarted that reciprocal process.[123] Freedom in poverty was purely nominal, a freedom to starve and suffer. Wage laborers could not truly decline work, so employers could ignore their interests; free workers' only hope lay in appealing to the disinterested benevolence of employers. Slavery, in contrast, bound the interests of owners and slaves and guaranteed the rights of enslaved workers. This "identity of interest" protected them far better than the "repulsive charity of a selfish and often heartless world"; even census data suggested that New Englanders resorted to the poorhouse at

greater rates than Southerners.[124] One Alabamian's stomach turned at the solution of the "soup house." Slaveholders, he insisted, *had* to fill slaves' wants in lean times. The enslaved laborer earned it, "has a right to it," and it was "no charity"; in contrast, free labor forced poor whites to resort to charity soup or starve.[125]

Proslavery exaltations of the "identity of interest" between slaveholders and slaves fed on growing suspicions of "disinterested benevolence."[126] Disinterested benevolence—popularized in the eighteenth century—pushed aside regard for personal interest, ties, or affections in favor of unadulterated altruism, even to the detriment of one's own interests or personal relationships. Harriet Beecher Stowe scathingly described disinterested benevolence as requiring people to disregard their interests so completely that they would go willingly to hell to serve the greater good.[127] By the mid-nineteenth century, as enlightenment universalism gave way to romantic particularity, many people on both sides of the slavery debate affirmed the validity, even importance, of particular ties and affections. They expressed distrust of forms of benevolence that diminished the relevance of personal relationships. Certainly, people ought to seek the good of the entire human family. Nevertheless, benevolence flowed best through particular relationships; caring more for one's family and friends, or even nation, than for distant strangers was entirely appropriate. Richard Henderson Rivers, a proslavery moral philosopher, rejected "disinterested benevolence" because it made virtue impractical by treating friends and enemies, neighbors and strangers alike. Rivers believed that "reason and revelation teach us that virtue is discriminating. We owe duties to ourselves, to our neighbors equally with ourselves, and then to strangers and enemies."[128]

This close-to-home benevolence, some polemicists claimed, protected enslaved blacks. Ownership harmonized the interests of "labor" and "capital" and ensured sympathy between them. As George Fitzhugh explained it, a person loves dependents "because they are his" and "man loves that nearest to him best." Selfishness protected dependents.[129] Just as crucially, dependency strengthened the *efficacy* of benevolence, since "we cannot be sure of benefiting those whom we cannot control."[130] The property relation reduced the need for the fellow-feeling of sympathy; as property, the enslaved laborer's interest and the owner's interest perfectly coincided because the slave, as a dependent, fell into the circle of protection and self-regarding benevolence. Enslaved blacks, as extensions of their owners, were protected

by slaveholders' self-interest. Slaveholders, though capable of unselfish benevolence, would care for their human property even without it. Fitzhugh was hardly a typical defender of slavery; his criticisms of capitalism and his idealization of slavery as the foundation for society put him well outside the norm. Yet while Fitzhugh's intellectual edifice was unusual, his building blocks were conventional.[131] Slaveholding engendered sympathy, even as it rendered it less necessary.

As slaveholders asserted the harmony of self-interest, affections, and humaneness in protecting enslaved blacks, slaveholders faced growing attacks on their practices of buying and selling slaves. Not only did these sales strain the notion that slavery forged bonds of affection between slaveholders and their human property; sales also clearly resulted in emotional anguish for enslaved blacks who were separated from family and friends. Antislavery writers stressed that slaveholders bought and sold slaves without regard for family ties, and in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* these attacks played a large and growing role in the public debate about slavery. Criticisms of family separations came from all corners, even from people only mildly concerned about slavery. Slaveholders who stood firm against accusations of physical cruelty squirmed when accused of emotional cruelty. In the economics of slave transactions, self-interest pitted itself against the boasted protective ties of slavery. Accusations of emotional cruelty proved more difficult to ward off than accusations of physical cruelty.

Proslavery polemicists responded in various ways, most commonly by denying the charges or insisting that they only rarely (and reluctantly) separated families. In many respects such defenses replicated proslavery claims about physical treatment: enslaved blacks suffered no more from broken families than did their free counterparts. Besides, one South Carolinian wrote, any such "offensive feature of slavery" would inspire greater sympathy from slaveholders.[132] Poverty and the "slavery of circumstance," the Episcopal bishop John Hopkins of Vermont argued, tore apart more families. Some free fathers could not support their children, and others voluntarily deserted their families, which enslaved men could not do.[133] Hopkins's point may have been personal—his father had abandoned his family—but it fit neatly into traditions denying that slaves' pain was unique.[134]

Some defenders of slavery similarly cautioned that separation, though regrettable, beat the alternatives. Edward Pringle explained that the infrequent evil of separations paled in comparison to a family member turning to crime

to take care of a poverty-stricken family.[135] Edward Josiah Stearns insisted that banning separations would have disastrous, unintended consequences. Slaveholders could not permit slaves to marry neighbors' slaves, since owners might need to sell them in the future; this unnatural prohibition against cross-plantation romance would lead to inbreeding and broken hearts. That would create far more anguish than "the few, the *very* few, separations."[136]

By the late 1850s a very small number of slavery's most radical defenders downplayed the harm done in separating families by claiming that slavery provided the blessing of marriage in the first place. Richard Henderson Rivers argued that Africans practiced "promiscuous concubinage," rather than marriage: slavery introduced marriage to them.[137] Robert Augustus Toombs, a US senator from Georgia, likewise argued that marriage was one of the "blessings of civilization" unknown to Africans. If slaveholders did occasionally deny marriage to slaves, Toombs suggested, they "deprived the slave of no pre-existing right." Toombs then quickly turned to more conventional points, arguing that separations were rare and not unique to slavery.[138] Still, his unusual argument that marriage was not a preexisting right reflected the radicalization of proslavery. Not even the tiniest shred of inhumanity could be traced to slavery.

Proslavery radicalized unevenly; the willingness of a few polemicists to defend separations highlights the reluctance of the majority to do so. What is most striking about proslavery arguments concerning the effects of slavery on the family is not the extreme arguments of a few; rather, it is the relative *absence* of such arguments in polemical literature. This silence merits investigation, especially because, in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, antislavery writers had gained ground by emphasizing emotional cruelty. Polemical needs alone should have pushed proslavery writers to fight back. And slaveholders had personal reasons to want to rebut those charges: they exalted the emotional bonds not only between themselves and enslaved blacks but also within enslaved families.[139] Advice literature encouraged marriages for the sake of morality and humanity, and some slaveholders explicitly rewarded slaves for marrying within an estate.[140]

Many slaveholders also took measures to avoid separations. Richard Eppes forbade his slaves from marrying distant, off-plantation spouses. In 1859, when John Corn asked for an exception to marry Celia, Eppes offered to sell Corn to Celia's owner, since he "did not wish to separate families, it being a rule of the plantation."[141] When slaveholders sold enslaved laborers, they

often professed a desire to keep families together, sometimes even enlisting the aid of the enslaved individuals themselves to find new owners.[142] Large-scale sales—often occasioned by death of an owner—proved tricky; one Virginian pondered his options, lamenting that he hated "to scatter the poor creatures over the face of the earth." He satisfied himself by selling enslaved families in groups.[143]

Why did slaveholders fail to capitalize on such efforts? In fact, the professed concern for families helps explain the relative absence of separations in the public rhetoric. In private, slaveholders thought they worked hard to prevent separations, and they resisted any attempt to pin blame for separations on themselves.[144] But the efforts of some owners only exposed the vulnerability of slaves to separation; such efforts highlighted the difficulties of keeping families together. Proslavery polemicists professed scorn for the slave-trading "monster," insisting that owners would "submit to much privation" rather than sell slaves unnecessarily; even if they did sell, they would not sell to a trader.[145] Slaveholders distinguished themselves from traders by telling themselves and others that they *had* to sell their enslaved laborers: to get rid of a recalcitrant slave, to divide an estate, to move elsewhere, or to deal with financial problems. They rarely described a free choice.[146]

In the public arena such efforts and explanations—even if true—would have been a liability. Denying responsibility for slave trading might preserve individuals' reputations for benevolence, but it hardly defended the institution. Slave traders did exist, and they were selling *someone's* slaves—quite a lot of them. The internal slave trade thus played an ambivalent role in proslavery rhetoric; by 1840 most polemicists publicly defended the legitimacy of the trade, but its practice strained idealizations of slavery.[147] Between 1820 and 1860 an average of two hundred thousand enslaved African Americans per decade moved from the Upper South farther south or west; perhaps about 60 percent of this movement was due to the internal trade.[148] Even more enslaved blacks faced sale within states. Of the two million slaves sold between 1820 and 1860, two-thirds were sold locally.[149] Enslaved blacks thus faced extremely high risks of losing a family member to the trade or westward migration, particularly with the growth of cotton cultivation in the nineteenth century. The high demand for slave labor in states such as Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas to cultivate cotton and sugar drew enslaved workers from the Upper South.[150] Regardless of individual intentions, slaveholders knew that economic distress, westward migration, and

the division of estates sundered families. Many slaveholders did, of course, choose to break up families. But even those who insisted that they would never do so willingly also recognized that such sales were a frequent reality, even if they did not blame slaveholders for the sales.[151] When an enslaved man and woman had different owners, a marriage could tear apart when one owner moved or sold one person; a plantation formbook sternly warned against such marriages, since they left couples "liable to separation."[152] A slaveholder who sold a family to a trader at a loss might find that the trader split up the family to make a profit. Many slaveholders suspected precisely that.[153] The silence of polemicists on family life reflects slaveholders' awareness of the difficulty in defending themselves more than it shows a lack of desire to do so. The criticism struck too close to home.

Slaveholders recognized that even those who prided themselves on humaneness did not protect enslaved families adequately. Vilot Lester, an enslaved woman in Georgia, wrote to her former mistress in North Carolina, asking about the fate of "my Presus little girl." Lester's current owner, "a man of Reason and fealing wishes to grant my trubled breast that mutch gratification" by buying her. Lester sent the letter after nearly four years of separation from her mother, brothers, sister, and daughter. She expressed an anxious desire to see her former owners again, probably in the hope that playing on her former owner' feelings would bear fruit, whether in restoring her child (but not the rest of her family) or in getting her mistress to buy her back.[154] Even with a "fealing" master and a mistress who expected her slaves' love, slavery separated families, and slaveholders knew it.

Even for those inclined to keep families together, dealing with the choices of other slaveholders posed practical and financial obstacles. Humaneness became a bargaining tool. In 1861 Hector Harris of Bedford County, Virginia, asked William Haxall about a price for Henry. Henry's family anxiously pressed Harris to purchase him, but Harris explained that the purchase would force him into debt. Two years later, Harris approached Haxall again as he returned a "greatly distressed" Henry (likely after a year's hire), adding that he wanted "to accommodate the family." Harris had just gotten Henry valued at $1,200. Three weeks later, Harris doubted he could afford that, but he added dismissively, "It was merely to satisfy the old negroe." By January 30 he offered $1,500, payable over two years. Haxall finally sold Henry on February 16 for $1,900, due within thirty days. Harris squirmed at the price but pointedly noted, "His family seems a good deal distressed."[155] The situa-

tion is revealing. Haxall was slow to sell Henry, even to keep him with his family. Perhaps he hoped to put the softer-hearted Harris at a disadvantage in negotiations; Harris, in turn, tried to drive a better bargain by invoking Henry's feelings rather than his own need for Henry's labor. Maintaining families was a messy, expensive proposition requiring the cooperation of others. Many individuals could not or would not make financial sacrifices, and such individuals could salve their consciences by pinning the inhumanity elsewhere. Indeed, by emphasizing that someone else would inevitably, but cruelly, separate families, some slaveholders even reassured themselves that they were not cruel for doing it first. In 1856 one Virginian advised a friend disposing of a father's estate to "get the best price"; discounting enslaved laborers "to get good homes" would allow less scrupulous buyers to sell them at a profit.[156]

Westward migration often sundered white and slave families alike. Slaveholders unwilling to separate slaves by sale may have shed some scruples about doing so through migration when they, too, moved away from family, albeit voluntarily. Although migration (rather than the trade) accounted for only 40 percent of the interregional movement of slaves, migration wreaked its own devastation, tearing hundreds of thousands of enslaved blacks from their friends and relatives belonging to neighbors or relatives.[157] Some slaveholders, like Charles Beakeley, blanched at separating families through migration: he explained to William Roane Aylett that, because his enslaved laborers had intermarried with his neighbor's, he would neither move nor sell them.[158] But many slaveholders chose differently. Aylett's relatives sent him a letter asking him to tell the slaves that "their relations are well."[159]

Private efforts did not translate into public rhetoric because they made slaves' vulnerability to separation painfully clear; private efforts cast doubts on the benevolence of the system. Even if slaveholders could preserve immediate families and keep mothers with small children, extended families and older or adult children did not fare well, and slaveholders could not easily deny it. They could not sincerely insist that separations did not happen or that enslaved African Americans did not mind. Apologists loathed conceding the point, but they often recognized that they could not win. Instead, they chose silence.

The African Slave Trade

Not only did humaneness divide pro- and antislavery forces, but the growing radicalism of proslavery claims of humaneness also increasingly divided proslavery ranks by the 1850s. The dynamics of the debate reoriented proslavery arguments, forcing slavery's defenders into ever-stronger professions of humaneness. Yet these claims caused difficulties, especially the increasingly popular assertion that blacks were especially suited, physically and psychologically, to flourish in American slavery. Such arguments struck at a long-standing proslavery distinction between an illicit, cruel slave trade and the morally legitimate, humane slavery. If blacks found their truest happiness in slavery, why should polemicists condemn the trade? Admitting the cruelty of the slave trade also seemed to taint slavery. A growing contingent of slavery's most radical defenders rejected any hint of inhumanity, even traditional condemnations of the slave trade as cruel piracy. But the radicalization of proslavery humanitarianism splintered the proslavery community; many polemicists—even those deeply committed to defending slavery—shrank from such claims. They relied on arguments that slavery, though not perfect, prevented more suffering than it caused; they could not risk tying slavery's fortunes to inhumanity.

By the 1850s, proslavery writers had grown dependent on arguing that blacks, by providential design, belonged in slavery and would find their greatest happiness there. Initially, few people seemed to notice the direction of this logic. If God had designed blacks to thrive in slavery, why should anyone condemn the trade that brought Africans to such happiness? What could really have been so wrong with the trade? But drawing such a conclusion flew in the face of a long-standing, crucial distinction between slavery and the trade, a distinction relatively few Southerners wished to abandon. One Charlestonian admitted that reopening the trade was "a logical [con]sequence of *some* of the arguments of the southern poeple [*sic*]." But he quickly warned against relying on strict logic: "no man is willing to abide by the inferences which *another* will make from his premises."[160] Indeed, most Southerners defended the distinction. Catholics who wanted to maintain slavery had to distinguish it from the trade or defy Rome; Gregory XVI's papal encyclical in 1839 had clearly condemned the African trade.[161] Others smoothed over the issue of slavery's cruel origins by explaining that God brought good out of evil; still others simply suggested that happy results did not justify cruel means.[162]

A small group of radical proslavery polemicists, particularly in South Carolina, began to reject such concessions in the 1850s. To such radicals the distinction between the trade and slavery no longer made sense. Over the course of several decades, proslavery writers had subtly shifted from arguing that slavery was better than the alternatives to arguing that blacks—in God's plan—would find happiness only in slavery. Criticizing the trade implied that enslaving blacks did not serve their truest interests, something slavery's most radical defenders could no longer admit. Such writers jumped on these contradictions in proslavery thought; slavery would rise or fall with the trade.

By the late 1850s, economic factors and the growing polarization of the debate helped push proslavery rhetoric to one of its logical conclusions: that the slave trade was a moral, benevolent enterprise. A small group of white Southerners began to agitate for the reopening of the slave trade. As the world cotton market soared, they worried that they would lose their near-monopoly if they could not fill the demand. Cotton promised great profits, both for cotton-growing slaveholders and for those who sold slaves, but as the price of cotton surged in the 1850s (after a depression), prices for enslaved workers shot up even faster than cotton prices. Internal migration pushed the demand—and prices—even higher, and natural population growth could not fill that demand. The rising prices threatened to cut off some southern whites from slave ownership.[163] As sectional tensions flared up, an aggressively expansionist proslavery wing believed that slavery's fate depended on its expansion into new territories to check northern political power; such expansion depended on an abundant, affordable supply of enslaved labor.

Yet supply and demand were only part of the story; crucially, not all protraders supported *actually* importing Africans in practice. Yet they still defended the trade in the abstract—or argued for merely lifting the ban on the trade—because attacks on the trade veered dangerously close to attacks on slavery itself. Logic alone hardly drove protrade agitation, but many radicals feared that conceding humanitarianism on any count would burn them in an increasingly hot debate. Denouncing the trade threatened the claim that blacks were providentially designed for happiness in slavery. When a committee of the South Carolina House of Representatives deliberated the question of the trade, the committee tied the issue to arguments from benevolence: "God designs *African slavery* to be an *American institution*." Failing to respond to "unqualified stigmas" against the trade left slavery unprotected.[164] Denunciations of the trade undermined arguments for the naturalness of

slavery. Indeed, when the Vatican condemned Bishop Augustus Martin's claim that slavery was "the manifest will of God" for a people unsuited for freedom, the Vatican official invoked Gregory XVI's encyclical condemning the trade: Bishop Martin wrongly attributed the effects of human violence to God's design.[165] Disowning the trade, as the Vatican recognized and protraders feared, undermined slavery's claims of providential or natural design, the racial bulwark of American slavery.[166]

Many protrade arguments sounded a familiar ring as writers stretched proslavery arguments to cover the once-taboo trade. Radicals denied that the slave trade was as cruel as detractors claimed, and they accused critics of relying on fanciful and overactive imaginations. Leonard Spratt, who, as early as 1853, proposed reviving the trade, explained in 1858 that overzealous abolitionists had exaggerated, or even imagined, its evils. Other Americans only believed the outlandish tales because Southerners had not defended the trade as they ought.[167] When the special committee appointed by the South Carolina legislature to consider the question of the trade decided in favor of the trade by a six-to-one margin, the committee peppered its recommendation with dismissals of "alleged inhumanity" and "alleged 'horrors.'"[168] Like proslavery advocates, protraders dismissed the likelihood of atrocities by invoking the protective power of economic self-interest. Why would traders kill or maim people they hoped to sell?[169] A second, related strategy denied all of the "imputed horrors" of the trade and dismissed any suffering as minor and insignificant. Insofar as Africans did endure minor hardships en route, the benefits of slavery would "more than compensate for the sufferings."[170]

Advocates of the trade argued, furthermore, that insofar as the trade had been cruel, legalization and reforms would transform it into a benevolent "commerce of mercy."[171] Suffering resulted only because traders had to flee authorities. Hiding the trade thwarted the process of sympathy, which depended on visibility. One harrowing depiction of suffering on an illegal voyage prefaced a call to legalize the trade; illegality forced it into secret and appalling conditions without benevolent oversight.[172] Under the protective scrutiny of laws and public opinion, captives would experience nothing worse than the conditions faced by all immigrants.[173] The idea had been building for several years. As early as 1853, Edward Josiah Stearns suggested that reforms would turn the slave trade into "a positive blessing." He did not yet advocate reopening the trade—he worried that a "fresh supply" of cheap

labor would reduce incentives for good treatment.[174] Such worries dissipated by the late 1850s; protraders saw only unadulterated benevolence.

Protrade logic, moreover, relied heavily on the assumption that nature had designed Africans and their descendants to live in slavery. Protraders imagined most Africans as already living in servitude in Africa. Although activists admitted that the trade occasionally enslaved free Africans, they argued that, far more often, the trade transferred enslaved Africans to more humane American owners. Even free Africans fared better in American slavery, which rescued them from the mouths of cannibals.[175] As early as the late 1840s, polemicists, though holding back from advocating the legalization of the slave trade, had stressed its humane benefits. In 1849 Jefferson Davis had written to proslavery ethnologist Samuel Cartwright that the trade softened the servitude of Africans by giving them Christian, American owners.[176] In the 1850s such sentiments hardened into outright protrade polemics. In 1860 Cartwright, who argued that the natural, best state for blacks was slavery, lamented that concern about "imaginary sufferings" deprived Africans of the benefits of exchanging their "barbarous masters for civilized ones."[177] Slavery, rather than beginning in an act of violence, began in nature.

Protraders joined abolitionists in denying the moral distinction between the trade and slavery itself; any purchase or sale of slaves lay open to the same criticisms. Insofar as the African and internal trades could be distinguished morally, the internal trade looked worse; it bought and sold enslaved Christians, whose moral sentiments had been enlivened. Those enslaved American Christians loved their families. Africans, in contrast, barely knew about marriage, and they willingly sold their own children.[178] Ominously for slavery's defenders, protraders echoed antislavery arguments. In an 1858 argument against the westward expansion of slavery, George Weston argued that "christianized and civilized" African Americans suffered more acutely than did "heathen savages."[179] The similarity of protrade and antislavery positions created problems for proslavery antitraders; protraders accepted antislavery logic but not its conclusions.

Protraders thus put their proslavery opponents in a difficult position. Antitraders could not easily disavow the internal trade among American slaveholders, because it was too deeply entrenched in slavery; disavowal would feed antislavery attacks. Many would not have wished to disavow it, even if they could. But nor could they easily defend the internal trade. Individual slave-

holders could claim that they never separated families voluntarily, but they could hardly deny that others did. Protraders forced antitraders into criticizing the internal trade. John B. Adger fumed at protrade callousness to separations: "though a very degraded savage, the mother at least, loves her child."[180] Protraders leapt on the inconsistencies, tensions, and ambiguities in the proslavery movement; their antitrade opponents fought back, but they stumbled over the contradictions within proslavery rhetoric.

The debate over reviving the trade created fractures within the proslavery community about the benevolence and humanity of the African slave trade. Within proslavery circles, especially in South Carolina, a fierce debate ensued, with high stakes on both sides. For many protraders, disavowing the trade undercut the argument that blacks belonged in slavery; treating the trade as violent and inhumane denaturalized slavery itself. Antitraders, too, wished to naturalize slavery, but they could not so easily shake off decades of denouncing its violent origins. Some admitted the original injustice of enslavement but argued that the customary holding of those slaves over centuries—or at least decades—gave slaveholders a prescriptive legal right to property in slaves. Invoking the legal concept of prescription, in which uninterrupted, customary usage of a piece of property can create a legal claim to that property, slavery's defenders buried the violence and injustice of enslavement in the past. But embracing the reopening of the trade would bring that violence into the present. Tying slavery to the cruel trade shattered slavery's moral credibility. The distinction between the trade and existing slavery *had* to be maintained to protect slavery; the trade's cruelty was too well established. Erasing the distinction, moreover, threatened to weaken antiabolitionist support for slavery. The distinction between the trade and slavery mattered deeply to people who saw immediate or even gradual abolition as cruel or dangerous but who also shrank from describing slavery as a good in itself. Slavery might be more benevolent than American freedom, but not even all of slavery's defenders viewed it as the most benevolent situation imaginable.

Many proslavery antitraders deeply resented efforts to blur the distinction and thus taint slavery with the trade's cruelty. They thus insisted vociferously on the distinction, drawing on older arguments, such as Catholic bishop John England's defense of the distinction.[181] As John Adger argued, the "*moral* conflict" could ill afford an association with the trade's well-known cruelty.[182] Nor did antitraders believe that regulations would transform the trade; the trade relied on "necessarily" cruel practices.[183] The ongoing evidence of

cruelty on the illegal slave voyages turned others against the trade; the sights of "misery and suffering" had "cured" one official of his support for reopening.[184] Supporting the trade endangered the entire proslavery movement, compromising all claims of benevolence or any claim to divine support. In 1861 England's fellow Catholic Bishop Augustin Verot attacked abolitionism, but he predicted the "speedy downfall" of the Confederacy if it authorized the trade.[185]

Some antitraders suggested that reviving the trade would not only undermine proslavery rhetoric but would also destroy the benevolence of slavery itself. The trade subverted proslavery arguments that affection, self-interest, and humanity coincided to protect slaves. J. Johnson Pettigrew, the lone dissenter on South Carolina's legislative special committee on the slave trade, used traditional proslavery arguments to object to the trade. Self-interest would not protect enslaved laborers if slaveholders could replace sick or injured workers too cheaply. A slaveholder's sympathy would falter; "how could he sympathize with creatures with whom he could not even converse?" Absentee slaveholding would soar, since slaveholders would be afraid of the new "savage" slaves, some of whom might be cannibals. Respectable neighbors would flee, reducing the force of public opinion against the rare miscreant who abused enslaved workers.[186] In 1857 George Fitzhugh similarly speculated that sympathy would fail between slaveholders and enslaved Africans: "too wide a difference hardens the hearts and brutalizes the feelings of both master and slave."[187] In 1854 Fitzhugh had predicted the trade would revive the "pristine cruelty" of slavery by sundering interests and humanity.[188] The principle of property fused the interests of the slaveholder and slave; by devaluing that property, the trade would weaken that connection and the slaveholder's self-interested concern for the welfare of slaves.

Most ominously, humaneness would prove ineffective on new captives, who would respond only to brute force.[189] The process of turning African captives into slaves, Pettigrew explained, required violence. Historically, Pettigrew noted, slavery had been more cruel. Newly captured Africans had not yet accepted their servitude, and generations of ownership had not yet softened slaveholders' hearts toward their human property. To rule over the newly enslaved African, Pettigrew added, it was "necessary to appeal to his physical senses. What did he know of duty? What did he care for moral rebuke? He must see his blood flow." Slavery itself had become benevolent, but the slave trade could never be.[190]

On both sides the stakes were high; for the trade's defenders, the belief that enslaved blacks were natural slaves meant that the process of fitting blacks for slavery required little violence. The "abuses" of the slave trade inhered not in the trade itself but in individual misbehavior. The trade's opponents, in contrast, insisted that the trade itself was the core problem. Pettigrew demeaned Africans by calling them savages who would not respond to higher moral reasoning, but he recognized that enslavement required violence. The process of dehumanization—turning a human being into a slave who accepted his or her enslavement—could not be done humanely. By restoring the slave trade and forcing white South Carolinians to begin anew this process of molding Africans into slaves, slaveholders would lose the argument from humanity.

The debate strained proslavery rhetoric by pitting two versions of proslavery humanitarianism against each other. Agitation for reopening the trade was relatively contained, but the issue exposed the tensions within a movement that was radicalizing unevenly. Opponents of the trade comforted themselves by estimating that nine out of ten South Carolinians opposed the agitation; Bishop Augustin Verot of Florida concluded that protrade support could "be considered as nothing." Still, the agitation exposed serious cracks and tensions within proslavery humanitarianism. If the movement was small, antitraders thought the agitation worth condemning, because the radical strategies cut at the heart of proslavery rhetoric.[191] The agitation mattered precisely because it flowed directly out of the contradictions building within proslavery arguments. Polemicists could not agree on strategies to deal with such tensions in their rhetoric and, instead, worked at cross-purposes. As some polemicists insisted on the comparative humaneness of slavery, an increasingly radical contingent no longer admitted any criticisms of slavery on humanity.

As the Civil War began, the debate showed no signs of resolution. If anything, the rhetoric grew even more extreme as each side grew more convinced of its own humanity and benevolence and its opponents' barbarity and malice. Arguments from pain had only stirred up the debate rather than offering moral clarity. Both sides had begun debating with the conviction that their claims were not only true but obviously true. The ensuing years tore away their confidence that they could easily persuade others but left the desire to do so. As their frustration and rhetoric escalated, both sides struggled with growing

ambivalence in their own conceptions of humanitarianism. Humaneness reoriented the rhetoric of the slavery debate, but it did so in ways that troubled the participants. Neither side could develop a wholly consistent strategy for tapping into the language of humaneness, but nor would they abandon it.

As the language of humaneness pervaded the slavery debate, its malleability made it a profoundly ambivalent and contested contribution. Even a writer for the proslavery *De Bow's Review* could say that human beings "involuntarily and naturally sympathize with human suffering, and desire to relieve it." Yet the author called for the revival of the slave trade, a claim that horrified not only abolitionists but fellow slaveholders.[192] The languages of cruelty and humaneness had provided a shared cultural inheritance, and the various heirs fought for a larger or exclusive share of the legacy. As antislavery writers pointed out the discordance between proslavery ideas about happiness and the reality of suffering slaves, apologists for slavery were put at a serious, even fatal, disadvantage in a society increasingly revolted by pain. Yet as slavery's defenders depicted the institution as humane, antislavery writers grew uncomfortable with the suggestion that the ultimate wrong of slavery lay in the physical pain that it caused rather than in a denial of rights or degradation of the human person. But they could not or would not abandon the rhetoric and, instead, intensified their claims of slavery's cruelty.

Epilogue

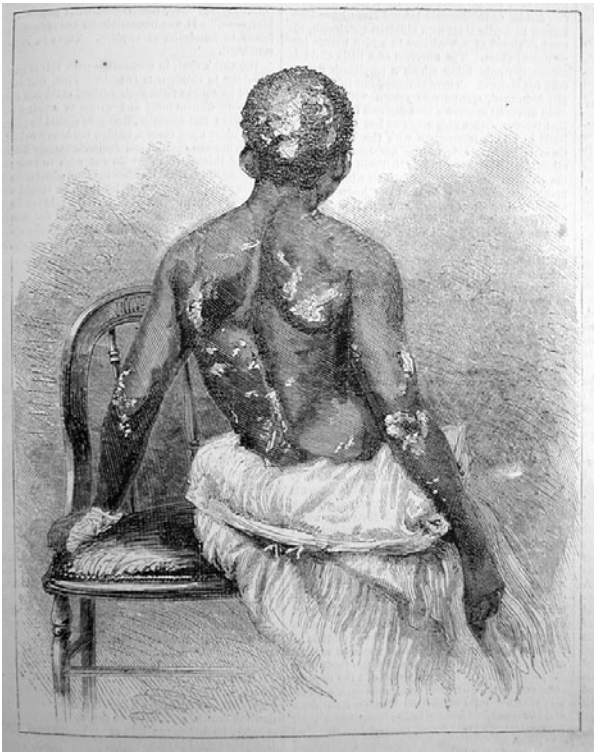
Pain, Memory, and Moral Identity

In March 1865, as the Civil War was drawing to a close, Abraham Lincoln famously reflected that Northerners and Southerners "read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other."[1] Lincoln could have easily added that the warring regions also invoked the aid of humaneness against each other. Yet sharing a moral language and appealing to similar moral principles did not mean that Americans shared concrete moral convictions. Instead of offering a way out of the conflict, humaneness exacerbated the slavery debate. The war of words did not solve the issue; it took a bloody war even to make the issue a moot point. For slavery's critics and defenders alike, humaneness played too crucial a role in defining their moral identities for emancipation to end the moral battle. Instead of uniting Americans, humaneness drove the two sides further apart. Even after the smoke cleared from the battlefields, Americans still cared a great deal about *who* could carry the label of humaneness—and, just as importantly, who deserved to be labeled cruel. Nor did the question about the meaning of

humanitarianism go away as a concrete issue. The demise of slavery as a practical question gave way, in coming decades, to arguments about humaneness and the meaning of freedom.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, some abolitionists continued to point to slaveholding cruelty to push for intervention in the conquered South, to ensure that slaveholders did not reenslave free blacks or regain social power. In April 1865 Susan B. Anthony fumed when she heard news of Lincoln's speech "urging the recognition of those 12000 ex-lords of the lash as supreme law-givers over the million ex-slaves."[2] Proving that slavery had been cruel still mattered immensely, and occupying the South gave slavery's critics a chance to collect evidence. In 1864 Albert Gallatin Browne sent Wendell Phillips a ring taken from a pillar in a slaveholder's basement "evidently used to 'truss' the poor negro up by the arms previous to flogging."[3] In 1866, three years after the picture of an enslaved man's whipped back had generated enormous interest, John Oliver of Richmond, Virginia, sent Wendell Phillips a picture of the "barbarism of Slavry [*sic*]," the back of a young woman covered with burns, which had been inflicted by the wife of Henry Abrams.[4] Just as *Harper's Weekly* had done with the first famous image, the magazine printed an engraving of the photograph with an accompanying story. The details became gruesome and concrete: "Live coals were laid upon her back and the back of her head, and the flesh on her back and limbs was so burned that when she was released she could scarcely stand and was nearly crazy."[5] Despite the legal end of slavery, the "barbarism of Slavry" still defined white southern culture.

Abolitionists had forged these rhetorical strategies decades earlier, but during reconstruction, stories of cruelty reminded the northern public of the utter moral depravity and barbarism of the South. *Harper's* stressed that white Southerners failed to recognize the cruelty behind such images. White Southerners treated Abrams as a "martyred and chivalrous Southern lady" when the Freedmen's Bureau investigated her cruelty.[6] The message was clear: southern culture had been so thoroughly corrupted by slavery that it no longer could even recognize barbarism when confronted with it, burned in human flesh. In 1863 the image of a whipped slave's back rallied support for the Union; in 1866 images of a burnt freedwoman's back demanded punishment for recalcitrant white Southerners who refused to accept emancipation. Thus, when Albert Gallatin Browne acquired a slaveholder's cowhide in September of 1865, he made sure to stress that he had taken it from "the wife



Marks of Punishment Inflicted upon a Colored Servant in Richmond, Virginia. This engraving in *Harper's Weekly* was drawn from a photograph of a young woman in Virginia whose back had been burned with hot coals. The photograph echoed the famous image *The Scourged Back*, which had become a symbol of slavery's cruelty. Even after the war had ended, activists used images of cruelty to try to rally public support for greater intervention in the defeated South. See the article "A Cruel Punishment," *Harper's Weekly*, July 28, 1866. Courtesy of Brown University Library.

of a *senator in the rebel Congress* who was whipping a negro girl with it—*last month*." Not only were white Southerners addicted to cruelty; they had not surrendered it at Appomattox.[7]

As slavery itself ended, the memory of its cruelty continued to give radically inclined Northerners a way to declare their concern for southern blacks and to push for more expansive rights. Although the *Liberator* folded in 1866, other

activists worried that southern whites—who had only recently whipped enslaved blacks into submission—would not accept change. In 1867 Wendell Phillips declined the French abolitionist Augustin Cochin's invitation to attend an antislavery convention in Paris, pleading urgent matters at home; the freedpeople, Phillips explained, "are still suffering cruel oppression" and "are yet practically slaves."[8] When Elizabeth Cady Stanton objected to giving the vote to blacks before women, Abigail Foster insisted that Stanton "was never baptized in the sufferings of the slave."[9] Black suffering also exposed the inadequacy of reconstruction measures. Emancipation, Albert Gallatin Browne argued, had done little to protect blacks from extralegal violence. Free blacks lacked food and clothing, and they did more work for little money. The exslave, Browne explained, suffered "the most cruel treatment. 'He is nobodys dog now,' and everybody has a right to kick him."[10] Yet Browne's stinging indictment of southern cruelty also testifies to a tension in many white Northerners' thinking. His horror of slavery's cruelty battled with his skepticism about the quality of life blacks would enjoy in freedom; only his disgust for white Southerners held the two ideas together.

For many critics of slavery, however, the story of emancipation was a tale of victory over cruelty. In 1864 Frederick Douglass visited his former home in Maryland to see if the whipping post remained; he delighted his audience by reporting its disappearance. One observer reflected, "Never shall I forget *Mr Douglass*' description of the *Whipping Post*. It was a terrible revelation of the iniquity that has just been taken away from amidst this people."[11] Yet cheers of victory over the downfall of whipping also drowned out complaints about other forms of injustice. Whips yielded to new forms of organizing and coercing black labor, particularly the contract.[12] For many the specter of slavery's cruelty cast the new labor structures as positively benign.[13] Economic coercion paled next to bloody whips. The June 6, 1865, *New-York Daily Tribune* took cheer in the "Progress at the South": "Some complain of hard usage, and say they cannot trust their late masters; but, very generally, they cheerfully accept kind words and fair promises when tendered, and go to work at the low wages offered them."[14] The story, for the *Daily Tribune*, was one of developing racial harmony, not exploitation. Workers "cheerfully" took "low wages."

Former slaveholders found in proslavery humanitarianism a ready tool for understanding the new racial terrain. Antebellum arguments about benevolence gave white Southerners a way to interpret the war and its aftermath;

proslavery rhetoric morphed easily into postbellum attacks on emancipation's cruelty. In 1865 William Palfrey, the brother of the John Gorham Palfrey who had freed his slaves, resurrected the family quarrel over the humaneness of manumission, now expanded to the issue of wartime emancipation writ large. William raged, "Have the unfortunate creatures . . . gained by it?" He thought not. Instead, freedpeople wandered "about in rags & starvation, without employment, with idle & vicious habits gaining on them more & more, with no one to look to for care & attention when sick, sustaining a precarious existence in a multitude of cases by theft alone." The "unfortunate creatures," he warned darkly, were "disappearing rapidly."[15]

The Union's initial wartime policy of returning "contraband" fed southern theories that emancipation was an ill-conceived plan that harmed needy slaves more than owners. Slaveholders had insisted for decades that only their ministrations saved enslaved blacks from starvation. In South Carolina Iveson Brookes looked darkly at the federal troops' "insidious proposal" to return fugitives to their owners in 1862. The offer, he thought, arose because the troops and runaways had used up all their provisions, and the troops now needed to feed the runaways. Brookes suggested that whites should refuse to accept the fugitives, predicting that "the negroes too may learn a useful lesson themselves to be subjected for a time to the hardships of freedom."[16] Kate Foster, a young girl in Natchez, Mississippi, fumed at a similar offer in 1863: "The yankees have the impudence to send a petition to the planters to come and take their negro women & children as they are now starving. What consummate fools and knaves the federals are."[17] Northerners rejected slaveholders' benevolent care for enslaved people but then expected slaveholders to bear the burdens anyway.

Proslavery theories, moreover, gave some white Southerners a strong ideological interest in seeing emancipation fail to produce happiness. Slaveholders had denounced freedom as cruel, promising only poverty, starvation, and misery; slavery provided the only real foundation for interracial sympathy. Years of denouncing freedom as a cruel sham gave southern whites a practical model for shaping and interpreting postwar freedom. If blacks insisted on formal freedom, rather than freedom from starvation, homelessness, and misery, they now got what they deserved. Blacks had rejected their owners' benevolence; whites no longer owed them anything. Some whites did pity, rather than blame, free blacks, but the line between pity and rage was thin, especially as former slaveholders discovered that free blacks did not simply

accept whites' terms for freedom. William Palfrey had defined himself as a benevolent slaveholder, and in the immediate wake of emancipation, he pitied former slaves torn from his protective care. Yet the concern he professed for the fate of freedpeople in June of 1865 had, by October, become rage at a "vile, suddenly emancipated set of worthless negro slaves, who will sooner starve than work."[18] Freedpeople's behavior challenged his self-image in fundamental ways, and he reacted with fury. Southern whites idealized "faithful" slaves who had not abandoned them (or blamed troops for "stealing" the ones who had), but such pity depended on blacks' willingness to play submissive roles. Slaveholders' defense of slavery as a benign, protective institution gave them a psychologically compelling model for interpreting and shaping postwar race relations.

That model persisted. Decades later, in 1904, George L. Christian of Richmond, Virginia, wrote to the *Times-Dispatch* that "we who have lived in those days . . . are proud, too, to note the marked decline in the condition and the conduct of the negro, as the result of emancipation." Free blacks, he explained, had degraded to insanity and criminality; enslaved blacks, in contrast, never committed "'unmentionable' crimes . . . and consequently, 'lynching' was almost unknown." In fact, enslaved blacks had been loyal to the end and would have fought for the Confederacy if given the chance.[19] That Christian was "proud" of the "marked decline in the condition" of freedpeople is telling. White Southerners could blame southern blacks or northern whites, but either way, white Southerners interpreted emancipation as a rejection of their benevolence, the foolhardy insistence that blacks were better off in freedom. Some southern whites thus had a strong stake in showing African Americans exactly how imprudent this choice of freedom was. Lynching exposed not the vindictive violence of whites but the foolishness of blacks, who, having shed the guardianship of slavery, could be kept from crime only by violence. The more free blacks suffered, the more it proved the benevolence of slavery and slaveholders. Slavery had forged links of kindness, compassion, and sympathy; emancipation broke them. The Civil War settled the *practical* question of slavery, but white Southerners still needed to assert their morality and humanity well into the twentieth century.

As slavery receded further into the distant past, depictions of it grew ever more idyllic. Around the turn of the century, when Henry Bullitt recalled his family's slaveholding past in Kentucky, he thought back to happy slaves, fiddling and dancing, and his mother taking care of sick slaves. He fondly

remembered "Uncle Jack," who had been offered his freedom if he remained single but chose to remarry and stay in slavery. Bullitt likewise recalled Titus, an enslaved man who refused to accept a well-deserved whipping; Henry's father had told him he could not work until he did. Within three weeks "Titus walked up and said, 'Marster, please whip me so I can go to work, for I am tired of doin nothin.' "[20] On reflection enslaved blacks knew that the occasional deserved whipping was not cruel but was good for them. They might enjoy a taste of freedom, but deep down, they were happy to work. When Henry's mother, Mildred Bullitt, died in 1879, her obituary gushed over her care for the "dusky children of slavery." She would "arise from her bed in the dead hour of night, with snow on the ground, to minister to their wants. Often and often did she perform for them even menial services, when they were sick and suffering." But, the obituary lamented, "this loyalty of slave to master is gone; all the protecting care of the mistress, all the authority of the master, are things of the past."[21]

From 1912 to 1913 Herman Clarence Nixon, an Alabama native, budding historian, and future Southern Agrarian and contributor to *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), surveyed Alabamians about the treatment of the enslaved for a graduate project on slavery.[22] The free-response answers of white Alabamians echoed the claims of their antebellum ancestors.[23] Nearly all denied widespread cruelty, and they insisted on the kindness and humanity of slavery. John Yarbrough of Alabama reported that economic interest ensured that "the slave had the best of care with the least of punishment."[24] J. W. Winston, son of the largest slaveholder in Dekalb County, insisted that slaveholders "were generally kind and humane"; enslaved blacks were "well fed and comfortably clothed and lived in comfortable and convenient houses." Enslaved laborers worked "only moderately." Families were "generally kept together," but he knew "of no instance of great and lasting greif [*sic*] caused by separation of husband and wife or child from Parents."[25] Many respondents denied selling slaves. Only the "stress of circumstances," P. F. Mitchell reported, separated families.[26]

Not all white respondents denied cruelty entirely, but those who admitted cruelty also diluted their criticisms. M. T. Judge, who responded at the greatest length and most critically in a series of letters, described a "monster" whipping someone with a saw. But Judge knew "one case only—of severe and extra cruel treatment." He described cruelty as the exception rather than the rule, just as proslavery writers had treated cases of cruelty as the isolated

actions of the rare moral monster. Judge explained, "As a whole, the negro was well treated."[27] He likewise admitted that "unscrupulous" men took away the "virtue" of enslaved females, but he also explained that thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls often "solicit[ed] the caresses of men." Black women, he added, cared little about chastity; owners had to force them to honor their marriages.[28] More typically, James Davison, a lawyer, replied that "there were a few inhuman masters, as there were inhuman fathers, who whipped their slaves in a passion & revengefully & sometimes excessively & unwisely & cruelly." Davison immediately added, "But oh! How this story of this thing has been exag[g]erated to the damage of the character of the Southern people." Punishments—which resembled those given to white children—actually protected blacks. Owners most frequently punished slaves for harming each other; whites protected enslaved children from "excessive whipping" from parents. Davison further qualified his admission of occasional cruelty with the claim that "that mistake and crime was fast dying out before the war, and public opinion would soon have exterminated it entirely."[29]

Whether Nixon's white respondents in 1913 criticized slavery (as Judge did) or painted unambiguously positive portraits of slavery, they all cared deeply about the question of whether slavery had been cruel or kind. J. W. Grayson, a seventy-five-year-old respondent, insisted that although "slavery was *theoretically* wrong and in many respects morally wrong and sometimes abused," nevertheless, "the practical working of slavery was not one tenth as bad as Uncle Toms Cabin and 90 pr ct of northern writers represent it." Slavery was certainly better than "underpaid factory labor." Grayson added, "Now is the time to get authentic history while there are yet a few living truthful *knowing* witnesses."[30] But why was it so important for a man who admitted that slavery was "theoretically and in many respects morally wrong" to deny that it had been as cruel as a novel had claimed sixty-one years earlier? Why did Grayson find it easier to admit the "theoretical" wrong of slavery than to admit its cruelty? The moral stakes of debating cruelty did not disappear with emancipation. As white Southerners redefined their cultural identity, they clung ever more tenaciously to an image of southern moral superiority—and that image depended on painting slavery as benevolent.

As slavery grew chronologically distant and its revival less probable, fewer white Americans challenged white Southerners' depictions of it as benevolent. In the early twentieth century, interpretations of slavery as benign gained respectability across the nation. During 1922 and 1923 white South-

erners nearly succeeded in a campaign to erect a national monument in Washington to the faithful mammy who lovingly, happily cared for white children.[31] Reconstruction became a mistake. In 1915 D. W. Griffith's popular film *Birth of a Nation* portrayed Reconstruction as a calamity for white and black Southerners alike, destroying an idyllic system and giving blacks freedom for which they were unprepared and unsuited. Woodrow Wilson was famously reported as describing the film as history written with lightning; indeed, similar themes echoed in history books.[32] In 1918 Ulrich B. Phillips strengthened the academic respectability of such views in his *American Negro Slavery*, which painted slavery as a system of mild-mannered masters, happy slaves, and mutual affection. "Severity," he concluded, "was clearly the exception, and kindliness the rule." Slaveholders promoted Christianity and family life, sold enslaved blacks only rarely, gave "holidays, rewards and indulgences," preferred to rely on affection rather than fear, and "avoided cruel, vindictive and captious punishments." "In short," Phillips explained, "their despotism, so far as it might properly be so called, was benevolent in intent and on the whole beneficial in effect."[33] Phillips's view of southern benevolence became historical orthodoxy for decades. Americans could take comfort in the idea that white Southerners were not moral monsters; slavery had been wrong, but it really was not as bad as abolitionists depicted it. The myth of the happy slave lingered long after the smoke cleared on the battlefields.

Only in the second half of the twentieth century, with the advent of the civil rights movement, would such interpretations be seriously, and increasingly stridently, attacked by historians.[34] The historical profession's growing attention to African American perspectives made it increasingly implausible to take white proslavery claims of humaneness at face value. Today those arguments for slavery's humaneness seem patently absurd, in large part because of the success of historians in showing the cruelty of slavery. In 1996 Douglas Wilson and Steve Wilkins of Moscow, Idaho, published a pamphlet, *Southern Slavery, as It Was*, rehashing, almost to the letter, proslavery arguments about slavery's benevolence. Slavery had been "a life of plenty, of simple pleasures, of food, clothes, and good medical care," and "a relationship based upon mutual affection" and "mutual intimacy and harmony" between races.[35] When two historians from the University of Idaho countered these claims, they felt compelled to explain their decision to respond. After all, "professional historians have been reluctant to engage this amateur revisionism, in part, because it is often too transparent and outrageous to seem

worthy of attention."[36] Some people do still believe that slavery was a humane institution. But in the early twenty-first century those claims no longer carry the aura of intellectual respectability or plausibility. They have rightly been banished from respectable public discourse, to be uttered only in confidential whispers by those who think they are telling a truth that is politically incorrect.

Pain and Moral Authority

Towering stacks of history books piled on top of Kenneth Stampp's *Peculiar Institution* (1956) have established the absurdity of claims that slavery was a humane institution, but this should not blind us to the force that proslavery humanitarianism once held.[37] Today we see slavery as not only cruel but inherently cruel; enslavement rested on violence and the threat of violence. Yet it is precisely because antislavery humanitarianism seems so obvious—and proslavery humanitarianism so absurd—that the debate over the humaneness or cruelty of slavery tells us so much about the pitfalls of humaneness. It was not obvious in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America that humanitarian ideas would serve only antislavery. That this antislavery meaning now seems obvious was a hard-won victory for slavery's critics, and it was a triumph over two centuries in the making. And that victory was due to intensive effort, not the ineluctable unfolding of humanitarianism. Today the narrative of the rise and triumph of humanitarianism and the abolition of slavery are virtually inseparable. Abolition was, indeed, a triumph for humanitarianism, but that victory was the triumph of one set of narratives about slavery and humaneness over an alternative set.[38] Americans defined the practical meaning of humanitarianism by fighting over the moral implications of benevolence, humanity, and pain for slavery. Understanding how both proslavery and antislavery forces aligned themselves with the new language of humaneness tells us a great deal about the complexity of these moral categories.

The revulsion against pain entered moral discourse in startling ways. Americans on all sides of the debate used humaneness as a trump card, but the implications of humaneness were often unclear. Slavery's critics used humaneness as a weapon against slavery, but proslavery polemicists convinced other Americans that slavery was more humane than freedom in poverty. And proslavery claims mattered. Proslavery humanitarianism played a crucial role

in supporting slavery and weakening emancipationist sentiment, and these arguments shaped racial relations for decades after emancipation. Humaneness created rifts even within movements; antislavery writers could not agree on whether they should emphasize cruelty or human rights, and slavery's defenders disagreed over which aspects of slavery ought to be defended, reformed, or denied. Yet both sides assumed that they would win if they could only prove their opponents' cruelty. Both sides multiplied claims and counterclaims but to no avail. Neither side found that arguments about pain worked out in the way that they had hoped, yet neither side abandoned the strategy.

Few moral languages seem as natural, as self-evident, and as transparent as humanitarianism. Who could resist arguments for ending suffering? Yet that appearance of naturalness, self-evidence, and transparency fades when we look at how humanitarianism actually functioned in the slavery debate. Not only did humanitarianism develop only slowly and indirectly; its meanings were uncertain and contested, even in its earliest days. Instead of leading ineluctably to an obvious moral conclusion, the principles of humanitarianism served incompatible positions. Far from creating unity, humaneness spawned fractures within those movements. In practice the meaning of humanitarianism was extraordinarily flexible.

Humanitarianism could serve so many different purposes because it lacked a stable ideological core. It took its shape instead from the broader moral and ideological purposes it served. Even though humaneness appeared to be a simple moral language, it actually depended on a bewildering mix of competing assumptions about pain, moral responsibility for pain, and pain's relative importance in moral decision making. Both sides objected to cruelty, the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain. Yet categorizing pain as cruelty was itself a moral judgment. Americans could not agree on how to draw the line between unnecessary pain and useful pain, much less about which kinds of pain mattered more than others. Nor could they agree about how to draw lines of responsibility for pain. Both sides assumed that the existence of suffering created a moral obligation to relieve the pain of others, but they quarreled over who incurred those obligations and what, precisely, those obligations entailed. Moreover, pain could never be isolated from other moral concerns. The meaning attributed to enslaved blacks' pain depended on competing notions of the dignity, equality, and rights of the human person; that meaning also depended on how people balanced the values of freedom from pain and freedom from

coercion. The meaning of humanitarianism, in short, did not turn on the presence or absence of pain but on how various actors interpreted the meaning of that pain.

Despite the actual malleability of humanitarianism, it derives much of its moral power from the appearance of moral clarity. Humanitarianism relies on a facade of self-evidence, the sense that both cruelty and humaneness should be instantly recognizable to all people of goodwill. Humanitarianism works, in part, because it obscures the processes by which people actually form ethical judgments. Humanitarianism presupposes moral judgment, but it masks that complex process with a veneer of self-evidence and stirring rhetoric about human decency. By hiding (or circumventing) those judgments, the language of humaneness creates an apparent consensus about how "we" react to the pain of others. Yet that consensus is unstable, because it works only within a defined *we*, a specific moral community in which the meaning of a particular kind of pain has already stabilized.[39] In short, humanitarianism only works when we have already defined a certain kind of pain as intolerable cruelty and when we have defined the alternatives as better, or at least as more tolerable. The point is not that humanitarianism is meaningless; it is just far more fluid than we admit.

Yet part of what makes humanitarianism attractive is that by promising moral clarity, humaneness seems to offer a way to avoid stickier moral judgments. Pity for suffering victims offered slavery's critics an easier alternative to universal human rights or defining African Americans as equals. Talking about cruelty allowed whites to criticize slavery without asking tough questions about human rights, racial equality, or African Americans' place in society. Denouncing cruel tormentors did not require a commitment to equality, nor did it even imply an objection to the principle of slavery. Animals, after all, benefited from the moral revulsion against pain; children simultaneously learned to pity enslaved blacks and to stop tormenting flies.[40] Antislavery writers recognized the contradictions, but dropping the language of cruelty for an appeal to human rights would have compromised the support of the many whites who did not care about blacks' rights or equality. If objections to cruelty encouraged the notion that individuals had a right to bodily integrity, they also undercut arguments from principles of common humanity or universal rights.[41] The legacy of pinning racial justice to suffering mattered. A century later, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Educa-*

tion ruled against segregated schools on the basis that they psychologically harmed black children rather than that segregation denied equal rights to blacks.[42]

Humanitarianism's popularity also derives from its usefulness in creating neat pigeonholes for moral identity; Americans cared a great deal about defining themselves as humane. This is not surprising; early humanitarians worried about their own moral standing vis-à-vis sufferers rather than the rights of enslaved blacks to be free from pain. Slavery's critics and defenders alike proved their morality by showing their sympathy for suffering victims; denouncing cruelty affirmed whites' self-styled roles as protectors. Humanitarianism divided the world into neat categories of cruel villains, helpless victims, and humane protectors. The language of cruelty allowed—and still allows—people to categorize themselves as morally innocent and their political and moral opponents as not only morally wrong but *malevolently* and *maliciously* so. Our opponents' choices are not only wrongheaded but completely unlike anything that we might ever do. *We* have flaws, but *they* are moral monsters. Yet much of the pain, misery, and suffering that we label "cruelty" is often rooted not in malevolence but in apathy, greed, indifference, and self-centeredness. Such suffering takes root in the decision that others' pain matters less than our own, and in our willingness—even eagerness—to put our own welfare above the good of others. And this pain thrives on our tendency to use other human beings as tools for our own purposes rather than treating them as ends in themselves. Those flaws sound uncomfortably familiar.

Perhaps this is why humanitarianism works better at a distance, even though it seems that we *should* care more about suffering that we see and can respond to locally. Distant antislavery activists more easily recognized the evils of slaveholders than their own complicity in the plight of the urban poor; white Southerners diagnosed the suffering caused by industrial capitalism while remaining blind to the cruelties and injustices of enslaving people. Likewise, when we gaze at distant suffering, we more easily see the injustice. Our eyes are unclouded by our self-interest; we are hampered only by our lack of desire to sacrifice for reform. It is (relatively) easy to pity distant sufferers, and easier still to denounce pain in the abstract. It is much harder to tackle the problems in our own neighborhoods, especially evils that grow out of our choices and that we must change ourselves.[43]

The decision to frame arguments for and against slavery in terms of cruelty had lasting implications. As writers battled over the meaning of pain, they strengthened the hold of humaneness in moral thought. But the malleability of humanitarianism left a complex and ambiguous legacy that lingers today in patterns of thinking not only about racial politics but also about pain, morality, and the grounding of rights.

Pain persists in playing an ambivalent role in our moral thinking because as a society we find it easier to identify suffering than to answer hard questions about human rights and justice. This ambivalence appears everywhere. Competing definitions of economic justice echo antebellum debates that pitted comfort against freedom. In the legal system plaintiffs demand compensation for pain and suffering, and families of murder victims call for executions to "bring closure" to their emotional pain. Bioethicists debate the potential of therapeutic cloning to relieve suffering, while antiabortion legislators recently sponsored an "Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act." "Compassionate conservatives" stood against the president who "feels your pain." Today we agree that we ought to end cruelty. But the command to avoid cruelty can never be divorced from the broader moral and ideological frameworks in which we operate. Our notions of cruelty depend too closely on our ideas about what constitutes necessary or useful pain and how to balance the problem of pain with other moral goods; as a society we do not agree on the answers. A little more than 150 years after antislavery activists distributed images of the whipped back of a runaway, millions of people examined the photographs of abused Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib. The images unleashed stinging moral indictments—but of what and of whom depended on one's political views. If we can unite in the belief that inflicting unnecessary pain is always wrong, many Americans defend torture on the grounds that inflicting pain on suspected terrorists is necessary—and thus not cruelty.

The messy history of humanitarianism within the slavery debate reveals the limitations of a humanitarian ethic and the difficulty of resting moral judgments *solely* on objections to pain. This history suggests caution in relying on a moral compass that has pointed in so many different directions. When concern about pain is detached from a notion of human dignity or human rights, such concern offers only the thinnest defense against injustice.[44] Would slavery have been any less wrong if it had *not* been cruel? Indeed, appeals to humaneness competed with languages of human rights,

racial equality, and other ways of defining moral obligation. The lesson is probably not that we should scrap humaneness; it is still too important to throw out. Yet we must be cautious. The proslavery arguments should remind us that the language of humanitarianism can serve decidedly unjust ends. If humaneness is to mean something substantive, it cannot be isolated from a moral philosophy that asks and answers tough questions about the nature of our rights and our duties to other human beings and to animals.

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Notes

Abbreviations

ADAH	Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama
Brown	Brown University Library
Duke	Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library
FHS	Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky
Haverford	Haverford College Library
Houghton	Houghton Library, Harvard University
LC	Library of Congress
LSU	Louisiana State University Libraries
MS	Meeting for Sufferings
MS-Misc	Meeting for Sufferings, Miscellaneous Papers
NEYM	New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
PUA	Princeton University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries
PYM	Papers of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Haverford College
RBSC-PUL	Manuscripts Division, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society
SCL	South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina
SHC	Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
VHS	Virginia Historical Society

Introduction

1. I am applying the label *humanitarianism* retrospectively, but early Americans commonly used *humane* and *humanity* (as well as *inhumane* and *inhumanity*).

2. See Myra Glenn, *Campaigns Against Corporal Punishment: Prisoners, Sailors, Women, and Children in Antebellum America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and*

Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* translated by Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1995); Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007), 70–112; James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); and Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). Genuine humanitarianism, Gary J. Bass argues, also motivated calls for intervention into foreign conflicts, such as the drive for Greek independence. See Gary J. Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

3. See Rosalind Rey, *The History of Pain,* translated by Louise Elliott Wallace, J. A. Cadden, and S. W. Cadden (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 86. Pain, as Esther Cohen emphasizes, was treated as useful in numerous contexts in late-medieval Europe: as a path to holiness and a path to truth (as used in torture). Medical practitioners tried to limit pain primarily when they viewed it as a source of danger. See Esther Cohen, "Towards a History of European Physical Sensibility: Pain in the Later Middle Ages," *Science in Context* 8, no. 1 (1995): 47–74, esp. 60, 65, 68.

4. Heb. 12:16. Biblical quotations, except where otherwise noted (or within quotations), refer to the King James Version.

5. As Philippe Rosenberg notes, seventeenth-century Britons might interpret the same violent act as cruelty or as justice; the meaning of cruelty did not derive from the presence of pain. See Philippe Rosenberg, "The Moral Order of Violence: The Meanings of Cruelty in Early Modern England, 1648–1685" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1999), 4–7.

6. The broader language of human rights, Lynn Hunt notes, similarly rests on a paradox of self-evidence. Although human rights were (are) not universally recognized, they rest on the emotional appeal of self-evidence, not just rational arguments for their existence (Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights,* 19–20, 26).

7. Thomas Haskell highlights the importance of a new, more expansive understanding of causality to create the sense of moral responsibility necessary for humanitarianism. Yet we cannot explain humanitarianism without understanding the related changes in the moral meaning and value of pain itself. See Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation,* edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 107–60, esp. 133.

8. *Congressional Record,* H.R. Res. 194, 110th Cong., 2nd sess. (2008), H7224.

9. See Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 303–34; Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 463–93; John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 225–67; Hen-

rice Altink, "'An Outrage on All Decency': Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780–1834," in *Representing the Body of the Slave*, edited by Thomas Wiedemann and Jane Gardner (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 107–22; Cynthia Davis, "Speaking the Body's Pain: Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*," *African American Review* 27 (1993): 391–404; and Franny Nudelman, "Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering," *ELH* 59 (1992): 939–64.

10. Thomas Bacon, *Four Sermons upon the Great and Indispensible [*sic*] Duty of All Christian Masters and Mistresses to Bring Up Their Negro Slaves in the Knowledge and Fear of God. Preached at the Parish Church of St. Peter in Talbot County, in the Province of Maryland* (London: J. Oliver, 1750), xxiv.

11. Ibid., 39–40.

12. Thomas Bacon, *Four Sermons, Preached at the Parish Church of St. Peter, in Talbot County, in the Province of Maryland* (London: John Oliver, 1753), 13–14.

13. Ibid., 29.

14. Ibid., 31.

15. Ibid., 86.

16. See Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 257–300.

17. H. N. McTyeire, C. F Sturgis, and A. T. Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants: Three Premium Essays* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 143.

18. Maunsel White, Memoranda Book, May 6, 1861, Maunsel White Papers no. 2234, f. 7, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

19. James Huston, for example, argues that abolitionism arose from Northerners' shock upon encountering slaveholding cruelty for the first time; the proslavery-antislavery divide was thus "a gap in sensitivity." While Huston usefully highlights the significance of cruelty in antislavery thought, we risk naturalizing these reactions by divorcing them from the context that made such reactions morally meaningful. See James L. Huston, "The Experiential Basis of the Northern Antislavery Impulse," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 609–40.

20. Susan M. Ryan notes that "benevolence" could serve proslavery purposes. See Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 3.

21. Although historians have highlighted the role of cruelty in antislavery arguments, they have paid little analytic attention to similar proslavery arguments. Joyce E. Chaplin traces a sense of "humanity" among slaveholders in the early South, but she does not explicitly consider changing moral ideas about pain; Jeffrey Robert Young highlights the role of new conceptions of authority in encouraging slaveholders to think of themselves as benevolent, but he does not analyze broader shifts in the moral meaning of pain or humaneness. See Joyce E. Chaplin, "Slavery and the Principle of Humanity: A Modern Idea in the Early Lower South," *Journal of Social*

History 24, no. 2 (1990): 299–315; Joyce E. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670–1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Likewise, literary scholars have recently begun challenging the notions that sentimentalism served only antislavery. George Boulukos, a scholar of British literature, suggests that early ameliorationists (and sentimental novelists) contributed to later proslavery arguments. By presenting slavery as less cruel and thus more palatable, they also rendered it more stable. Moreover, the image of the "grateful slave" encouraged the idea that Africans and their descendants could be content in slavery. See George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 3–4, 14. Brycchan Carey suggests that eighteenth-century West Indian defenders of slavery, like their antislavery counterparts, used sentimental tropes. See Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760–1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), esp. chap. 4.

22. Michael O'Brien argues that proslavery polemics aimed to win political points within the South, not to convince Northerners. James Henry Hammond, for example, did not expect Thomas Clarkson to respond to his public letter. See Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life in the American South, 1810–1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2:948. Yet Hammond also corresponded with Lewis Tappan, who did try to convert Hammond, while Hammond used Tappan to get information about antislavery. Whatever their hopes for influence, antislavery and proslavery activists wrote with a deep awareness of the other.

23. Historians rarely study antislavery and proslavery ideology together. The tendency to isolate pro- and antislavery theory, and, indeed, northern and southern intellectual history, obscures both points of commonality and difference. My point is *not* that America was culturally or intellectually homogeneous but that we misunderstand humanitarianism by truncating its meanings. Christopher Leslie Brown's *Moral Capital* is a notable exception to this pattern of isolating proslavery from antislavery. See Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Although John Patrick Daly suggests that northern and southern evangelicals shared common religious and moral beliefs, he only analyzed southern evangelicals. See John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). Although I am not persuaded by his neo-Hartzian liberal-consensus theory, David F. Ericson's point that people often use similar ideas to argue for and against the same thing is useful. See David F. Ericson, *The Debate over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 15.

24. A sizable contingent of southern historians increasingly emphasizes the com-

patibility of slavery—and proslavery arguments for benevolence or paternalism—with broader thinking about economics and market relations. As James Oakes notes, benevolence should be distinguished from both paternalism and opposition to free-market systems. See James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 194–95. Likewise, Jeffrey Robert Young argues that market structures fostered paternalism (Young, *Domesticating Slavery*). I do not pretend to have determined whether slavery was capitalistic or premodern, but, like Oakes, I do not view proslavery claims of humaneness as premodern or anticapitalist. Rather, they are best understood in the context of the new moral importance of pain. Slaveholders proved eclectic in reconciling slavery with this moral shift. Lacy K. Ford's *Deliver Us from Evil* suggests that paternalism aimed to accommodate new humanitarian ideals. His argument, however, differs from mine in several crucial respects. First, whereas I focus narrowly on the issues of cruelty and humaneness, Ford is interested in a more capacious paternalism, which included religious instruction (sometimes including reading) and idealized slavery as a familial, affective relationship. Second, Ford focuses on tracing the diversity of southern responses across (southern) space and time rather than contextualizing such arguments in an evolving national moral discourse. Third, Ford is interested in humaneness primarily as an ingredient in paternalism; he thus gives little attention to the ways that humaneness reshaped the thinking of the early Upper South (where paternalism was less popular) or the Lower South's critics of paternalism. In contrast, my aim is not to trace the evolution of proslavery ideology but to show how new ideas about humaneness and cruelty pressed Americans to rethink the institution of slavery, whether they criticized, reformed, defended, or accommodated slavery. See Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 144–47.

25. For northern-southern contact see O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 27–51. At a high point in 1850, as much as 65 percent of Princeton seniors and 48.7 percent of all students came from slave states. From 1845 to 1856 southerners were more typically 41 percent to 52 percent of seniors; between 1819 and 1856 approximately 40.9 percent of Princeton seniors came from slaveholding areas. In the years 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1860 southern students made up 39.2 percent of all Princeton students. Southerners at Harvard and Yale were fewer, averaging 8 percent and 11 percent respectively. Statistics on seniors were drawn from *Catalogues of the Officers and Students* (1819–56), Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries; data for academic year 1842–43 were unavailable. For comparative data see Edward W. Knight, ed., *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860,* 5 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949–53), 4:249–50. My statistics differ slightly from Michael O'Brien's; he gives the average percentage of southern students, while I give the total percentage of southern students in those years. See O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 29.

26. Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," in *Complete Works of Abraham*

Lincoln, new and enl. ed., edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay (New York: Francis D. Tandy, 1905), 11:45; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386–438.

27. In 2005, for example, ABC News reported that 85 percent of Americans who believe in heaven also believe that they are going there; only 6 percent believed that they would not. Unfortunately, the poll did not ask what percentage of *other* people were on track for heaven. "ABC News Poll: Heaven," press release, Dec. 20, 2005, http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/994a1Heaven.pdf (accessed Aug. 7, 2008).

28. I am not attempting to provide a psychological analysis. Rather, I am trying to explain the processes by which slaveholders reconciled (or failed to reconcile) their behavior with their ideals. For a useful analysis of the historiography of slaveholding guilt see Gaines M. Foster, "Guilt over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 665–94.

29. Historians have written many excellent studies of the actual treatment of enslaved laborers and the role that treatment played in slaveholders' ideology. To name only a few, see Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint,* esp. 257–300; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1972); Oakes, *The Ruling Race;* and Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1956; repr., Vintage, 1989), 141–91. For a useful study of the role of benevolence in an individual slaveholder's ideology see Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). These studies, though fruitful, situate slaveholding ideology in the context of the plantation and unique southern ideologies. Jeffrey Robert Young and Lacy K. Ford both treat paternalism as—in part—a response to broader moral shifts, including the modern emphasis on the affective family, the rise of evangelicalism, and the growth of humanitarianism. This is a promising turn, but while both invoke the force of outside opinion, these outside factors need to be explored more fully. See Young, *Domesticating Slavery,* esp. 7–55, 123–60; and Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil,* 144–47.

30. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For biblical interpretation see Noll, *America's God,* 386–438.

31. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), esp. the introduction and chap. 2.

32. See Aristotle, *Politics,* edited by Stephen Everson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.4.1254a1–1.5.1255a1; and David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 69–72.

33. See David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 30, 32–35; and David Brion Davis, "At the Heart of Slavery," in *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 126–30.

34. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 3, 35.

35. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 1–4.

36. Since Scarry analyzed torture (in the context of interrogation), her model fits slavery only imperfectly; the purpose of slavery's violence was to coerce labor and force people to accept enslavement, not to compel them to answer questions. In the torture model the interrogator establishes the power of the regime by using pain to destroy the victim's world, rendering the outside world—and the words answering the question—meaningless and unreal vis-à-vis the reality of the pain. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 27–59.

37. Historians have tended to root humanitarianism in moral philosophy and liberalizing trends in theology that downplayed or denied the value of suffering and insisted on God's desire for human beings' earthly happiness. This is a key source of humanitarianism, but such accounts miss the significant strand of humanitarian thinking that not only took root in a positive valuation of suffering but also continued to value suffering as a spiritual discipline. See, e.g., Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak' "; Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976): 195–218; and R. S. Crane, "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,' " *ELH* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1934): 205–30.

38. See, for example, the debate between David Brion Davis and Thomas Haskell over the selectivity of humanitarian concern. Both assumed that pain was already a moral concern. Haskell defined preconditions for the emergence of humanitarianism, including (a) an ethical duty to aid sufferers, (b) a sense that one's inaction contributes to the continuance of that pain, (c) an understanding of the steps that could stop it ("recipe knowledge"), and (d) a psychological sense that such steps are small enough that omitting them would be wrong. Since Haskell attributes the ethical duty in his first precondition to the golden rule, his analysis stresses his second and third steps. For Haskell the core issue is thus the question of how people came to understand themselves as responsible actors in a widening sphere of action (in particular, how humanitarians came to see *distant* pain as their moral responsibility). Such questions are important, but we cannot take the ethical imperative to end the deliberate infliction of pain for granted. See Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," 133.

39. In 1999, when Deborah Gray White explained her preferences for *enslaved*, for example, she saw *enslaved* as a way to underscore both the brutality of slavery and black women's resistance. (Thanks to my colleague Jenny Shaw for this reference.) For a sampling of the positions on this debate see the H-slavery discussion thread "Use of 'Enslaved,' " Feb. 2–8, 2010, www.h-net.org/~slavery (accessed Feb. 9, 2010).

CHAPTER ONE: Self-Denial, Martyrdom, and the Formation of Quaker Humanitarianism

1. For example, Thomas Tryon (a non-Quaker who moved in Quaker circles) attacked slaveholding cruelty as domestic tyranny and abuse of power. See Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (Oct. 2004): 609–24.

2. See Philippe Rosenberg, "The Moral Order of Violence: The Meanings of Cruelty in Early Modern England, 1648–1685" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1999), 4–7; and Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 81.

3. Quakers have been neglected in the historiography of pain and cruelty, particularly in otherwise useful narratives that root humanitarianism in enlightenment ideas, the rise of sentimentalism, or liberalizing influences in theology. Yet we need to separate the various strains of humanitarianism and benevolence. Quakers did not simply reflect the broader culture of benevolence. Rather, they exemplified a distinctive strand of humanitarian thinking that glorified willing suffering and martyrdom, which tempered and complicated the reaction against pain. This reaction against pain was explored most fully in James Turner's 1980 study of the animal protection movement; historians have tended to assume that antislavery humanitarianism followed the same pattern and have thus paid too little attention to positive portrayals of suffering. See James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Elizabeth B. Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sept. 1995): 463–93; Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 303–34; Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976): 195–218; and R. S. Crane, "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,' " *ELH* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1934): 205–30. As a small part of his larger study, John Wood Sweet usefully suggests the prominence of suffering in Quakers' antislavery rhetoric. See John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 225–67.

4. G[eorge] F[ox], *Gospel Family Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks, and Indians* (1676; [Philadelphia: R. Jansen], 1701), 14–15, 17; see also Acts 8:27; and Kenneth L. Carroll, "George Fox and Slavery," *Quaker History* 86, no. 2 (fall 1997): 16.

5. Historians have tended to treat Quaker theology as bearing the "seeds" of antislavery "from the very start," particularly an "inner logic" of spiritual equality and love for all humankind. Most historians have thus explained the factors encouraging the flowering of latent seeds; Jean R. Soderlund persuasively shows the impor-

tance of institutional dynamics in this process. See Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 110; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975), 203; Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 33. Yet we can more usefully describe Quaker theology as fertile ground for antislavery. Treating Quaker orthodoxy as a dynamic process, rather than a static body of belief or predetermined growth, allows us to take seriously reformers' intellectual creativity within Quaker traditions. For the implications of understanding orthodoxy as a process see Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). See also the cautions in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 213–14n. For broad accounts of Quaker antislavery see also Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965); and Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963). Thomas P. Slaughter's study of John Woolman offers a valuable portrait of Woolman and his world; see Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

6. We know relatively little about Southeby's arguments, but Kenneth Carroll weaves together fragmentary references to sketch his activities. See Kenneth L. Carroll, "William Southeby, Early Quaker Antislavery Writer," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 89 (Oct. 1965): 416–27.

7. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 34.

8. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*, 26.

9. See Robert Piles, "Paper About Negroes" (1698), in *Friends' Intelligencer* 31 (April 1874): 91–92, repr. in *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688–1788*, edited by Roger Bruns (New York: Chelsea House, 1977), 9.

10. George Keith, "An Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes," repr. in Bruns, *Man and a Brother*, 5–8, 6.

11. Ibid., 8, 6.

12. John Hepburn, *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule, or An Essay to Prove the Unlawfulness of Making Slaves of Men* ([New York?]: n.p., 1715), 6–7.

13. *The Christian Pattern, or The Imitation of Jesus Christ, Being an Abridgement of the Works of Thomas à Kempis. By a Female Hand* (1744; Germantown: Christopher Sower, 1749), 59. This abridgement was made for Protestants; Philadelphia Quakers encouraged Sower to produce it. See "William McCulloch's Additions to Thomas's History of Printing," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 31 (April 1921): 145–46. John Woolman owned (and lent out) a copy of *The Imitation of Christ;* Anthony Benezet also read it. See Walter Forrest Altman, "John Woolman's Reading"

(PhD diss., Florida State University, 1957), 72; and Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition,* 93.

14. See J. William Frost, "From Plainness to Simplicity: Changing Quaker Ideals for Material Culture," in *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption,* edited by Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 16–37.

15. Piles, "Paper About Negroes," 9.

16. Hepburn, *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule*, 3–4.

17. Ibid., 6.

18. *The Christian Pattern, or the Imitation of Jesus Christ,* 52, 59, 53.

19. Hepburn, preface to *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule*, [iv].

20. In the eighteenth century *carnal* could mean "sexual," "bodily," "not spiritual," or "worldly." Quakers rarely discriminated among these. See the *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. "carnal, *a.*"

21. Ralph Sandiford, *The Mystery of the Iniquity: In a Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times,* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: [Benjamin Franklin] for the author, 1730), 7, 96. See also Ralph Sandiford, *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times* (Philadelphia: [Benjamin Franklin and Hugh Meredith] for the author, 1729).

22. Sandiford, *The Mystery of the Iniquity,* 107.

23. Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates* . . . (Philadelphia: [printed by Benjamin Franklin] for the author, 1737), 127.

24. Ibid., 242, 251–2.

25. Ibid., 34.

26. Ibid., 33–36.

27. Ibid., 10.

28. Elihu Coleman, *A Testimony Against That Anti-Christian Practice of Making Slaves of Men, Wherein It Is Shewed to Be Contrary to the Dispensation of the Law and Time of the Gospel, and Very Opposite Both to Grace and Nature* (1733; New Bedford: Abraham Shearman, 1825), 9–11. Coleman received permission to publish. See Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America,* 38.

29. Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage,* 126.

30. Ibid., 126–27.

31. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery,* 16–17, 32.

32. Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford; Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1813), 25–26, 29; Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery,* 15–17; Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America,* 44–46; Andreas Mielke, " 'What's Here to Do?': An Inquiry Concerning Sarah and Benjamin Lay, Abolitionists," *Quaker History* 86, no. 1 (spring 1997): 22–24.

33. See Jack Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

34. Philips P. Moulton, introduction to *The Journal and Major Essays of John*

Woolman, edited by Phillips P. Moulton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 3–16, esp. 12–13 for the influence of Woolman's essays. For examples of the journal's influence see Anthony Benezet to Samuel Allinson, Dec. 14, 1773, Anthony Benezet Letters, coll. 852, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford); Mary Brown, Catalogue of Books, Feb. 2, 1775, Austin Collection of Moses Brown Papers in the Archives of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (hereafter Austin-Brown, NEYM). John Greenleaf Whittier relished the journal enough to write the introduction for a later edition. See John Greenleaf Whittier, introduction to *The Journal of John Woolman* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1871), 1–49.

35. See Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 24–25; Prov. 12:10. Woolman cut out the first half of the proverb; numerous nineteenth-century abolitionists echoed this truncation. For example, [Jonathan Walker], *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth. By the Author of "The Branded Hand" and "Chattelized Humanity"* (Boston: J. Walker and W. R. Bliss, [1845?]), 27.

36. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast,* 12–13; see also chap. 4 herein.

37. Sabine MacCormack suggested this comparison. See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions,* translated by R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 2:6.

38. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 28.

39. Ibid., 25.

40. Ibid., 148.

41. Ibid., 208–9.

42. John Woolman, "On Keeping Negroes" (1746, published 1754), in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 54.

43. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 38, 161.

44. Ibid. 59–60; see also Isa. 33:15.

45. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 97.

46. For the interconnections of moral and physical sensibilities see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. 1–36. Barker-Benfield argues that depictions of animal or slave suffering served as a proxy for challenging the mistreatment of women and aimed to reform the morals and manners of men (215–86, esp. 224–36). While I do not treat antislavery concern as a proxy, Barker-Benfield usefully notes that sensibility focused on reforming the feeling (or unfeeling) subject rather than the object of sympathy. For the political significance of the sentimental novel see Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86.

47. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* Nov. 25, 1769, 157.

48. John Woolman, "Considerations on Keeping Negroes: Part Second" (1762), in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 211.

49. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 65, 69.

50. Ibid., 61.

51. Ibid., 59–60, 157; see also Isa. 33:15.

52. Ibid., 148.

53. See Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition,* 134–37.

54. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 161.

55. Ibid., 24.

56. Susan Garfinkel, "Quakers and High Chests: The Plainness Problem Reconsidered," in Lapsansky and Verplanck, *Quaker Aesthetics,* 50–89, 74.

57. [Anthony Benezet], *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes* (Germantown, PA: Christopher Sower, 1759).

58. Meeting for Sufferings (hereafter MS) of London to MS Philadelphia, Dec. 2, 1785, Meeting for Sufferings, Miscellaneous Papers (hereafter MS-Misc), coll. 1250, B6.1, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (hereafter PYM), Quaker Collection, Haverford.

59. See Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783,* esp. 80–81; and Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery,* 32–53.

60. "The Original Papers of Manumission Recorded by the Several Monthly Meetings Composing the Quarterly Meeting of Philadelphia, Arranged in Book Form 2d Mo. 1883," Haverford; Abolition Society Book, vol. 1, New England Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (hereafter NEYM), housed at Rhode Island Historical Society (hereafter RIHS).

61. In 1804, for example, William Allinson worked with Josiah Reeve and Gershom Craft to serve slaveholders with writs of habeas corpus. See William Allinson, "Notes of a Tour into Sussex," Oct. 1804, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, 11B, Haverford; and Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), esp. 60–81.

62. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783,* 123, 276; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823,* 216–17.

63. For a detailed examination of Benezet's influence, both in America and in Europe, see Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard,* 108–209.

64. Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 150.

65. Ibid., 186.

66. Anthony Benezet to Moses Brown, July 1, 1780, copy, Anthony Benezet Letters, coll. 852, Haverford.

67. MS of Portsmouth, RI, to MS of Philadelphia, June 9, 1784, MS-Misc, B6.1, PYM.

68. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox,* edited by Rufus M. Jones (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1963). See, e.g., [George Fox,] *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters, and Testimonies. Written on Sundry Occasions, by That Ancient, Eminent, Faithful Friend and Minister of Christ Jesus, George Fox,* vol. 2 (London: T. Sowle, 1698), 80.

69. Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers* (1753); facs. ed. repr. as *Sufferings of Early Quakers,* 5 vols. (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1998–2003).

70. MS London to MS Philadelphia, Dec. 2, 1785, MS-Misc, B6.1, PYM.

71. Anthony Benezet to Moses Brown, Dec. 28, 1773, Benezet Letters, Haverford.

72. Anthony Benezet to George Dillwyn, Sept. 15, 1779, Benezet Letters, Haverford.

73. Fox, *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters, and Testimonies,* 80.

74. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake,* 132.

75. For the political importance of martyr narratives see Nicole Mische Gothelf, "Persecution, Identity, and Politics: The English Protestant Martyr Narrative and Oppositional Politics in Early New England and Pennsylvania" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001); and Jan Stievermann, "A 'plain, rejected little flock': The Politics of Martyrological Self-fashioning Among Pennsylvania's German Peace Churches, 1739–65," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2009): 287–324.

76. *The Christian Pattern, or Imitation of Jesus Christ,* 57.

77. William Sherlock, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death,* 27th ed. (London: R. Ware, 1751), 1; Altman, "John Woolman's Reading," 88.

78. Preface to *A Collection of Memorials Concerning Divers Deceased Ministers and Others of the People Called Quakers, . . . with Some of the Last Expressions and Exhortations of Many of Them* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1787), iii, NEYM; Gregory, *Salvation at Stake,* 50–52.

79. Moses Brown to John Osborn, 1st mo 15, 1823, Austin-Brown, NEYM.

80. See chap. 2 herein.

81. Sarah (Tuke) Grubb, April 11, 1787, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 8, Haverford.

82. Heb. 13:3. See William Mott, "An Epistle, from Wm Mott of Mamaroneck to his Afflicted and Much Respected Friend Clemency Willets at Bethpage on Long Island," June 28, 1765, copy, 1821, American Friends Letters, coll. 851, Box 13, Haverford; Sandiford had done so in 1729. Sandiford, *The Mystery of the Iniquity,* [1]; Sandiford, *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times,* [i].

83. See, e.g., "A Testimony of the Monthly Meeting of Friends held at Newport for Rhod[e] Island ye 29 of ye 5th mo 1787: Concerning our Esteemed Friend Joseph Mitchell Deceased," Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 6, Haverford; and "A Testimony from Bristol Monthly Meeting Concerning Lydia Hawksworth Deceased," n.d., Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 6, Haverford.

84. Sarah (Tuke) Grubb, March 8, 1789, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 8, Haverford.

85. William Mott, "An Epistle, from Wm Mott of Mamaroneck to his Afflicted and Much Respected Friend Clemency Willets at Bethpage on Long Island," June 28, 1765, copy, 1821, Box 13, American Friends Letters, Haverford.

86. Samuel Allinson to "Sister C.C.," Dec. 19, 1780, Samuel Allinson Letterbook, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 11B, Haverford.

87. See Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783,* esp. 252–78.

88. Deborah Ferris to Rachel Sharpless, Feb. 7, 1792, American Friends Letters, Box 5, Haverford; see also Heb. 12:11.

89. [Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte Guyon], *The Exemplary Life of the Pious Lady Guion* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1804), 85, 95. Benezet owned a copy (see Gothelf, "Persecution, Identity, and Politics," 228n). For Quietism more broadly, see Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989). As the Quaker scholar Rufus Jones describes it, "Nothing divine . . . can originate in man as man." One must cease striving; in spiritual surrender and silence, "divine movings will spontaneously come." In the "Crucifixion of the self" God displaces the self. See Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism,* 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1921), 1:36–37.

90. Martha Routh, Journal, Aug. 25, 1784, 28, owned by Rebecca Jones, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 9, Haverford.

91. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake,* 318.

92. Abner Woolman Journal, chap. 33, March 1768, in MS-Misc 1772, B5.1, PYM.

93. MS London to MS Philadelphia, Dec. 2, 1785, MS-Misc, B6.1, PYM.

94. See Fox, *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters, and Testimonies,* 109; for Woolman see Gothelf, "Persecution, Identity, and Politics," 143.

95. Gothelf, "Persecution, Identity, and Politics," 271–74; Carla Gardina Pestana, "The Quaker Executions as Myth and History," *Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993): 441–69, 456.

96. "Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies" to "New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery," June 6, 1798, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 9, Haverford.

97. Anthony Benezet to Selina, Countess of Huntington, May 20, 1774, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford.

98. Philadelphia MS to London MS, March 1812, MS-Misc, C3.1, PYM.

99. *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. "suffer, *v.*"

100. See Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism,* 1:34–35.

101. *The Christian Pattern, or Imitation of Jesus Christ,* 248.

102. An analysis of Quaker antislavery helps to answer the question posed by Thomas Haskell: how did people begin to see distant pain as their moral responsibility? Haskell argues that capitalism encouraged people to understand their actions as having long-range consequences over time and space; capitalism widened the sphere in which they viewed themselves as responsible actors. They thus were more readily able to recognize how their action (or inaction) affected distant sufferers. See Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation,* edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 107–60. Quakers' tendency to analyze distant suffering through the lens of asceticism lent special meaning to these lines of causality; Quakers traced distant suffering directly to their economic choices. This helps explain why not all pain received equal attention—and why distant pain could matter more than local pain—despite the assumption that humanitarian concern should weaken over the distance.

103. Historical actors and historians (such as Thomas Haskell) have tended to treat distance as an obstacle to humanitarianism, but humanitarianism paradoxically often seems to work *better* over distance. The role of distance in humanitarianism is complex. British historian Seymour Drescher argues that the "tyranny of distance" allowed slavery to flourish; slavery, as Drescher puts it, was an "anomalous" (13) institution by European standards but was accepted "beyond the line" of Europe. See Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 1986), 12–18, 23. Eliga H. Gould similarly argues that Anglo-Americans understood the colonies as a zone in which British laws and norms concerning violence did not apply with the same force as in Britain itself. See Eliga H. Gould, "Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (July 2003): 471–510, esp. 474. But if distance allowed slavery to flourish, it also provided the basis for challenging slavery. Drescher and other historians also see the rise of abolitionism as a reaction to the disparity between metropolitan norms of conduct and distant colonial practices (Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery,* 164). Even as historians have suggested the dual role of distance in fostering complacency *and* outrage, historians have tended to focus on a gap between British and colonial perception. Although such analysis is helpful, my point is that cruelty and humaneness were (and often still are) understood and articulated in geographic or sectional terms. As will be seen below, the tendency to focus on distant cruelty—and in some cases to ignore local cruelty—persisted in American thinking. Americans frequently defined cruelty as a distant problem, even when local cruelties provided an alternative point of attack.

104. Anthony Benezet, *A Caution to Great Britain and Her Colonies, in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions* (1766; London: James Phillips, 1784).

105. John Murray to Moses Brown, March 6, 1786, Moses Brown Papers, 1.80, RIHS. In part, antislavery Friends worried that distance made it difficult for an illegally enslaved person to prove his or her title to freedom without networks of support.

106. Moses Brown to Jonathan Edwards, Dec. 16, 1788, Moses Brown Papers, RIHS. See also Sweet, *Bodies Politic,* 246–48.

107. [Philadelphia MS?], "Some Considerations on the Matter Proposed by the Meeting for Sufferings in London Relative to Slavekeeping and the African Trade" [1786?], draft, MS-Misc, 1786–89, B6.2, item 6, PYM.

108. Committee of Southern Meeting, Talbot County, MD, to Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings, June 30, 1791, MS-Misc, C1.1, NEYM.

109. Moses Brown to Clark and Nightingale, Aug. 26, 1783, copy, Moses Brown Papers, RIHS.

110. Moses Brown to [Joseph Hitchcock], Aug. 25, 1789, letterpress, Moses Brown Papers, Box 2X.16, RIHS; see also Box 1.101.

111. See, e.g., James Pemberton to Moses Brown, July 18, 1788, Moses Brown Papers, 1.93, RIHS.

112. Joanne Pope Melish argues that amnesia about the character (especially the

harshness) and extent of New England slavery helped shape New England identity. See Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), esp. 210–37.

113. [MS London], "The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans, Respectfully Recommended to the Serious Consideration of the Legislature of Great-Britain, by the People Called Quakers," Nov. 28, 1783; repr. in *Providence (RI) Tates Chronicle,* Oct. 27, 1784, Moses Brown Papers, 2.7, RIHS.

114. Woolman, "Considerations on Keeping Negroes: Part Second" (1762), in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 548.

115. New England Yearly Meeting to Quarterly Meetings, June 11–15, 1790, Austin-Brown, NEYM; MS Portsmouth, RI, to MS Philadelphia, June 9, 1784, MS-Misc, B6.1, NEYM.

116. [Moses Brown], "To the Printer of the *Providence Gazette,*" *Providence Gazette and Country Journal,* Feb. 21, 1784, newssheet, Austin-Brown, NEYM.

117. "Moses Brown's Manumission Deed, 1773," Providence Probate Record, vol. VI, p. 73, Nov. 12, 1773, transcript in Austin-Brown, NEYM.

118. Benezet, *A Caution to Great Britain and Her Colonies,* 19; [MS London], "The Case of our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans."

119. I am building on Haskell's argument that humanitarianism required an expansive notion of moral responsibility for distant suffering, but it is crucial to note that Quakers did not assume responsibility for distant suffering writ large but only the suffering that they traced to their own sinful worldliness. Moral perfectionism was a crucial ingredient in early humanitarianism. See Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," 132–33; see also Thomas Haskell, "Convention and Hegemonic Interest in the Debate over Antislavery: A Reply to Davis and Ashworth," in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation,* edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 200–259, esp. 224–26.

120. "A Testimony of the Monthly Meeting of Friends Held at Newport for Rhod[e] Island ye 29 of ye 5th mo. 1787: Concerning Our Esteemed Friend Joseph Mitchell, Deceased," Memorials Folder, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 6, Haverford; see also Isa. 33:15.

121. See Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783,* 110. Marietta roots this boycott in a broader context of avoiding products connected with other sins.

122. Mielke, " 'What's Here to Do?' " 39.

123. *London Chronicle,* June 20, 1772, in Benjamin Franklin to Anthony Benezet, Aug. 22, 1722, in Samuel Allinson Letterbook, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 11B, Haverford.

124. [MS London], "The Case of Our Fellow-Creatures, the Oppressed Africans."

125. [MS Philadelphia?], "Some Considerations on the Matter Proposed by the Meeting for Sufferings in London Relative to Slavekeeping and the African Trade" [1786?], draft, MS-Misc, 1786–89, B6.2, item 6, PYM.

126. Benjamin Ferris to Robert Vaux, July 28, 1816, American Friends Letters, Box 5, Haverford. For the language of crucifixion to the self see Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism,* 1:7.

127. Anthony Benezet to Moses Brown, May 9, 1774, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford.

128. To the General Assembly of Delaware State, Oct. 16, 1788, filed under C1.1, MS-Misc, PYM; Anthony Benezet to Queen Charlotte, Aug. 25, 1783, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford.

129. Anthony Benezet to Moses Brown, May 9, 1774, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford.

130. [Brown], "To the Printer of the *Providence Gazette*"; see also Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman,* 186.

131. Anthony Benezet to Selina, Countess of Huntington, May 20, 1774, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford.

132. William Rotch to Moses Brown, Aug. 27, 1789, Moses Brown Papers, 1.101, RIHS.

133. Hepburn, *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule*, 6.

134. Benezet, *A Caution to Great Britain and Her Colonies,* 27.

135. "To the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the State of CONNECTICUT. The Memorial and Petition of the Representatives of the People Called Quakers in New England," Sept. 9, 1788, *New Haven Gazette,* n.d., Austin-Brown, NEYM; Martha Routh to Moses and Mary Brown, May 7, 1796, Moses Brown Papers, 1.141, RIHS; MS Portsmouth, RI, to MS Philadelphia, June 9, 1784, MS-Misc, B6.1, NEYM.

136. Crito [Moses Brown], "On Slave Trade," *Providence Gazette and Country Journal,* Oct. 6, 1787, newssheet, Austin-Brown, NEYM.

137. Benezet, *A Caution to Great Britain and Her Colonies,* 27.

138. See, e.g., Ps. 95:8, Ezek. 36:26, and Mark 8:17.

139. This concern with white immorality helps explain the antislavery tendency, noticed by David Brion Davis and others, to pay less attention to the suffering entailed by capitalism and wage labor. Rather than objecting to all suffering, they focused on cruelty and suffering that resulted directly from immorality. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823,* esp. 233–54; and Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

140. Anthony Benezet to John Fothergill, April 28, 1773, copy, Anthony Benezet Letters, Haverford; Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London: E. Taylor, 1808), 284–88.

141. Sweet, *Bodies Politic,* 69.

142. Joanne Pope Melish suggests that New England's self-perception as historically free relied on the real marginalization and symbolic removal of people of color. See Melish, *Disowning Slavery,* esp. 163–237. John Wood Sweet also notes that a focus on suffering could evade questions of rights. See Sweet, *Bodies Politic,* 225–67.

143. Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 153–59. Wesley, like the Quakers, was an admirer of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ;* he even produced his own (abridged) edition. See Thomas à Kempis, *The Christian's Pattern, or, A Treatise of the Imitation of Christ*, edited by John Wesley (London: C. Rivington, 1735).

144. Historians disagree on the originality of Quaker contributions to antislavery and humanitarianism. David Brion Davis cautions that Quakers' "collective testimony" developed late and alongside secular arguments. Roger Anstey also sees moral philosophy as the intellectual foundation for antislavery; he credits Quakers primarily with energizing the movement. Jack Marietta, however, points to Quaker predominance in even non-Quaker antislavery movements. Yet more important than the issues of precedence and origins is that there were two distinct religious and intellectual traditions that created two parallel streams of humanitarianism, which too often get lumped together. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823*, 213–24; Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810*, 91–235; and Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783*, 123.

CHAPTER TWO: Humanity, Human Nature, and the Problem of Cruelty

1. This discussion will not detail the role of slavery itself in moral philosophy, which has been well treated elsewhere; instead, I will focus on how shifts in moral frameworks created concern about cruelty. For slavery in moral philosophy see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), esp. 391–445. Historians such as Norman Fiering and R. S. Crane have highlighted the importance of religious shifts in shaping the new emphasis on feeling and sympathy. The division between the two strains of humanitarianism analyzed in chapters 1 and 2 is not a division between religious and secular forms of humanitarianism. Rather, I am distinguishing between a strain of humanitarianism (exemplified by Quakers) that took root in an ethic of self-denial and the spiritual value of earthly suffering from a second strain rooted in moral-philosophical and religious affirmations of pleasure and interest. See R. S. Crane, "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" *ELH* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1934): 205–30; Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no. 2 (1976): 195–218; and Norman S. Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

2. I do not regard the transformation from eighteenth-century antislavery to a post-1830s abolitionism as a shift from rationalism to emotionalism; the former could be both emotional and sentimental; rather, I emphasize the shift from focusing on cruelty to emphasizing pain itself. In contrast, see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 175.

3. Jonathan Edwards, *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade and of the Slavery of the Africans: Illustrated in a Sermon Preached Before the Connecticut Society*

for the Promotion of Freedom, and for the Relief of Persons Unlawfully Holden in Bondage, at Their Annual Meeting in New Haven, September 15, 1791, 3rd ed. (1791; repr., New Haven: New Haven Anti-Slavery Society, 1833), 6, 9.

4. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, or, Private Vices, Public Benefits,* edited by F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (1924; facs. repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), 4.

5. Ibid., 24.

6. Ibid., 124–26, 56.

7. Ibid., 24. It appeared in French and German translations by the mid-eighteenth century. See F. B. Kaye, introduction to Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, or, Private Vices, Public Benefits,* xxxiii–xxxvii.

8. Francis Hutcheson, *Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson,* edited by Bernhard Fabian, vol. 1, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) (facs. ed., Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971), vii.

9. Ibid., 163–64.

10. See Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," esp. 198, 206–9. Fiering roots "irresistible compassion" in the Cambridge Platonists' affirmation of the passions and human nature against the darker views of human nature exemplified by Hobbes and Calvinism. See Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," 198–202. John Mullan points out, however, that sympathy and benevolence often proved limited and rare in mid-to-late-eighteenth-century sentimental novels. See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 144–46. Nevertheless, sympathy and benevolence mattered as moral models; the assumption that natural desires supported benevolence and virtue is a significant departure from a moral anthropology based on the denial of passions and self-interest.

11. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,* 215–17.

12. Ibid., 218–19.

13. Francis Hutcheson, *Collected Works of Francis Hutcheson,* edited by Bernhard Fabian, vol. 2, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1728), 133–34.

14. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,* 219.

15. Karen Halttunen argues that a belief in natural human goodness made murder inexplicable and horrifying. See Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4, 57–59; see also James A. Steintrager, *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 37–83.

16. The complexities of Hutcheson's theories of moral motivation, his growing emphasis on cultivating virtue, and his increasing interest in faculty psychology are detailed in John D. Bishop, "Moral Motivation and the Development of Francis Hutcheson's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, no. 2 (1996): 277–95.

17. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* in *Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy,* edited by Henry D. Aiken (New York: Hafner Press, 1948), 183.

18. Ibid., 258.

19. Ibid., 215–17.

20. Ibid., 217.

21. See Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 18–56.

22. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (1976; repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984), 9.

23. Ibid., 10.

24. While tensions exist between Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), and among editions of the latter, the concept of sympathy is too often conflated with benevolence. Smith defined *sympathy* as "our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever," not just altruistic ones. See Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 10n; and Raphael and Macfie, introduction to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 20–25. Later editions show greater concern with the direction of sympathy; the impartial spectator also became more internalized. Yet sympathy grounded both benevolence and economic exchange. For historians interested in the relationship between capitalism and humanitarianism, it is noteworthy that they shared theories of human conduct and sociability. For the stakes of this question see Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

25. In Hume's sympathy, in contrast, one actually felt the same feelings as another. See Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 9.

26. Ibid., 74–75.

27. See ibid., esp. 82–85, 109–13.

28. Ibid., 9.

29. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,* 218–19.

30. James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 11.

31. Nicole Eustace traces the importance of the passions in Pennsylvania to the debate surrounding Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man,* but she does not examine the role of Scottish moral philosophy in the "passions question." See Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), chap. 1, esp. 40. Like Alexander Pope, Scottish moral philosophers saw self-love and the social good as compatible; passions could serve the public good. However, the Scottish emphasis on benevolence and sociability (and the compatibility of benevolence and self-love) heightened American concerns about the proper ordering of passions and the moral dangers of cruelty.

32. James Steintrager suggests that moral-sense theory treated cruelty as alien to human nature by normalizing benevolence. Yet cruelty challenged not only benevolence but also the entire project of rooting morality in affections and natural impulses. See Steintrager, *Cruel Delight,* 37–83; and Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," esp. 198, 206–9.

33. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast,* 12–13.

34. *The Four Stages of Cruelty,* in *Hogarth's Graphic Works,* compiled by Ronald Paulson, rev. ed., 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 1:211–15, 2:201–4; "First Stage of Cruelty," in Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works,* 2:201. For a literary analysis of Hogarth's engravings as emblematic of the problem of the "inhuman" moral monster see Steintrager, *Cruel Delight,* 37–83.

35. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London: E. Taylor, 1808), 6.

36. Historians interested in the intellectual genealogy of antislavery have rightly emphasized the role of benevolence, but its role in proslavery rhetoric and moral theory has received far less attention. See Roger Anstey, "A Re-interpretation of the Abolition of British Slave Trade," *English Historical Review* 87, no. 343 (April 1972): 304–32; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975), esp. chaps. 4–6; Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion," 195–218; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture,* esp. chaps. 11–12.

37. See Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 92–99.

38. Anthony Walke, Miscellany Book, 1791–1805, Anthony Walke Writings, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY (hereafter FHS).

39. For this transition see James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

40. Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1960), 3.

41. See George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 462–71. For the stakes of the shift see Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (1932; repr., Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 72–96, esp. 82–83. See also Kenneth P. Minkema and Harry S. Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition and the Antislavery Debate, 1740–1865," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (2005): 47–74.

42. Paley's utilitarianism did not, like that of Jeremy Bentham, reduce morality to a calculus of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, but it did tie the morality of an action to the resulting pain or pleasure. The popular reduction of utilitarianism to the Benthamite version is unfortunate and obscures the extent to which Paley and many other eighteenth-century philosophers focused on consequences. My characterization of Paley as a utilitarian echoes Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (London: School of Economics and Political Science, 1950); Martha McMackin Garland, *Cambridge Before Darwin: The Ideal of a Liberal Education, 1800–1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 56; and Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000), 16.

43. William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,* edited by D. L. Le Mahieu (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 42.

44. As James Turner notes, the countless imitations of Paley are a "tribute to the fecundity of authorial imaginations in inventing new titles for the same book" (Turner, *Without God, Without Creed,* 97). Paley's American influence is treated more fully in later chapters.

45. Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,* 13–14.

46. Despite the significant philosophical distinctions between the theories of utility and sympathy, I do not view Paleyite utilitarianism and benevolence as a retreat from sympathy but rather as a parallel language that similarly demanded a response to the pains and pleasures of others. Although conceptually distinct, sympathy and sensibility often worked in tandem with benevolence in practice. See, in contrast, Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 27.

47. For Witherspoon and the influence of Scottish moral philosophy at Princeton see Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822: The Search for a Christian Enlightenment in the Era of Samuel Stanhope Smith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

48. J. Bogart, copy of Thaddeus Dod, Lecture Notes from John Witherspoon, Moral Philosophy, 1777, Box 59, f. 8, p. 57, Princeton University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries (hereafter PUA).

49. Ibid., 21–22.

50. Anonymous, Lecture Notes from Witherspoon, Moral Philosophy, 1794, Lecture Notes Collection, Box 59, f. 9, pp. 23, 30, PUA.

51. William Finney or David Bishop, Lecture Notes from Samuel Stanhope Smith, Moral Philosophy, c. 1809, Lecture Notes Collection, Box 53, f. 2, pp.15, 32, 38–39, PUA.

52. See Turner, *Without God, Without Creed,* 66–72, 85–86.

53. Final Minutes, Feb. 4, 1795, in Final Minutes, 1792–1801, Cliosophic Society Archives, Box 1, PUA.

54. Attending more closely to this mutual construction of benevolence and self-interest may help illuminate the relationship between capitalism and humanitarianism. For this debate see Bender, *The Antislavery Debate.*

55. Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections,* viii.

56. Final Minutes, March 19, 1800, in Final Minutes, 1792–1801, Cliosophic Society Archives, Box 1, PUA.

57. See chaps. 4–6 herein.

58. Hannah Webster Foster's *Coquette,* for example, rooted part of Eliza's downfall in her permitting herself to become "the sport of contending passions." See Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette,* edited by Cathy N. Davidson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 107.

59. See G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

60. Foster, *The Coquette,* 58.

61. See Philippe Rosenberg, "The Moral Order of Violence: The Meanings of

Cruelty in Early Modern England, 1648–1685" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1999), 37–38.

62. Samuel Stanhope Smith, "The Example of Jesus," Sept. 25, 1805, Samuel Stanhope Smith Papers, f. 1, Manuscripts Division, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries (hereafter RBSC-PUL).

63. Ibid.

64. Anthony Walke, "Short Remarks on Slavery, & the Treatment of Negroes" (1793), Miscellany Book, 1791–1805, 7, 9–10, Walke Writings, FHS.

65. Anthony Walke, "Philanthropy. Sermon III—1 Epistle John Ch 4 v. 11," Miscellany Book, 1791–1805, 162–6, Walke Writings, FHS.

66. Walke, "Short Remarks on Slavery, & the Treatment of Negroes," 9, 15.

67. Ibid., 12.

68. Ibid., 49.

69. See Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility,* esp. 215–86. Barker-Benfield points to the underlying concern with the manners and morals of those inflicting cruelty. As Markman Ellis notes, sensibility and its concern with morals and manners had wide political and moral utility. See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Philippe Rosenberg's work on Thomas Tryon suggests the extent to which objections to cruelty built on concerns that violence undermined principles of deference and legitimate relations of authority. See Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (Oct. 2004): 609–42, esp. 630–31.

70. Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, handwritten copy, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 8, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford); see also Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society (hereafter RIHS).

71. On class in perceptions of passions see Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale,* 151–99, 339–44.

72. Finney or Bishop, Smith, Moral Philosophy, c. 1809, lecture 12, p. 18, Lecture Notes Collection, Box 53, f. 2, PUA.

73. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* edited by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 162.

74. Edwards, *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade,* 7–8.

75. John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774; facs. ed., Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 46–47; Heb. 3:15, 4:7; Ps. 95:8.

76. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, *Letters from an American Farmer; Describing Certain Provincial Situations, Manners, and Customs, Not Generally Known; and Conveying Some Idea of the Late and Present Interior Circumstances of the British Colonies in North America* (London: Thomas Davies, 1782), 234.

77. Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament,* 345–46.

78. For interconnections of moral and physical sensibilities see Barker-Benfield,

The Culture of Sensibility, 1–36; Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 201–40; and Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2003), 244–56.

79. Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation, Which Was Honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge, for the Year 1785, with Additions* (repr., Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1786), 99–100.

80. Benjamin Rush, "Paradise of Negro-Slaves.—A Dream," in *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical,* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Thomas and William Bradford, 1806), 308.

81. *The Poems of William Cowper,* edited by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, vol. 2, *1782–1785* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 139–40 (book 2, lines 5–9).

82. *The Poems of William Cowper,* 139–40 (book 2, lines 24–25).

83. See Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast,* 11.

84. *The Poems of William Cowper,* 139–40 (book 2, lines 35–36).

85. [Arthur Lee], *An Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America, from a Censure of Mr. Adam Smith, in His Theory of Moral Sentiments, with Some Reflections on Slavery in General* (London: Printed for author, 1764), 43.

86. Walke, "Short Remarks on Slavery, & the Treatment of Negroes," 31.

87. For the four-stage view of history see Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); for its importance in American morality see Rosemarie Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 1992): 192–215.

88. Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, handwritten copy, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 8, Haverford.

89. Adam Smith, for example, offered the workings of interest-driven commerce as an alternative to the coercion of slavery.

90. Philip Gould argues that attacks on the barbarism of the slave trade legitimated commerce by distinguishing between a savage slave trade and commerce that refined the manners of civilized people. See Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

91. Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition, as Applied to the Slave Trade, Shewing That the Latter Only Can Remove the Evils to Be Found in That Commerce* (London: James Phillips, 1789), 76.

92. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 334–35, 341.

93. See Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility,* 213.

94. These associations were not entirely new. Medieval thinkers, for example, associated barbarity with the barbarian "other" and associated excessive, irrational violence with animalistic fury. Yet these associations acquired a new edge when Scottish stadial thinking linked them to the linear progress of civilization. For medieval usages see Daniel Baraz, *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 4.

95. William Shenstone, "An Elegy on the Miserable State of an African Slave," in

Granville Sharp, *An Essay on Slavery, Proving from Scripture Its Inconsistency with Humanity and Religion* (Burlington, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1773), 27.

96. *A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans, in the Character of an Ancient Negro, Born a Slave in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1790), 10.

97. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 9.

98. The use of the golden rule was not itself new; see, e.g., *The Athenian Oracle,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1705), 1.

99. Samuel Hopkins, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of Africans: Shewing It to Be the Duty and Interest of the American States to Emancipate All Their African Slaves* (1776; repr., New York: Robert Hodge, 1785), 47–48.

100. For an analysis of this role reversal see Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 150–62.

101. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 113. Hume likewise suggested that people "consider how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong" (Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* 255).

102. Hopkins, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of Africans,* 47–48.

103. Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species,* 104.

104. Anthony Walke, "On the Duties of Man," Miscellany Book, 1791–1805, Anthony Walke Writings, FHS.

105. See chap. 1. As Joanne Pope Melish notes, white New Englanders tried to erase their own history of slavery or to redefine it as both brief and extremely mild, especially in contrast to slavery farther south. See Melish, *Disowning Slavery,* esp. chap. 6.

106. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* 220.

107. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 237–38.

108. Crèvecœur, *Letters from an American Farmer,* 216.

109. As Thomas Haskell has argued, the question of why humanitarians began attributing moral significance to the distant pain of others is a critical one; yet we must also ask why humanitarians tended to fixate on distant pain, despite the conceptual challenges of a distant sympathy. See Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," in Bender, *The Antislavery Debate,* 107–60. Julie Ellison sees eighteenth-century discourses of sensibility as a way of talking about the pain caused by a system "from which artists and intellectuals knowingly benefited but at the same time could not control" (Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999], 7). Yet it is crucial that eighteenth-century antislavery writers attributed suffering to active moral transgression or depraved morals and manners. Significantly, suffering became morally important precisely as testimony to the moral failings of slaveholders, not guilt for suffering beyond one's control.

110. Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in*

America, upon Slave-Keeping [1773], in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush,* edited by Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 15–16.

111. Finney or Bishop, Smith, Moral Philosophy, c. 1809, p. 6, Lecture Notes Collection, Box 53, f. 2, PUA.

112. See, e.g., Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* 214.

113. As Laura Stevens notes, British and American readers of Protestant mission texts asked readers to pity Native Americans, but this pity was channeled through sympathy with the missionary who struggled to save Native Americans. See Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 138, 69.

114. Zephaniah Swift, *An Oration on Domestic Slavery. Delivered at the North Meeting-House in Hartford, on the 12th Day of May, A.D. 1791. At the Meeting of the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom, and the Relief of Persons Unlawfully Holden in Bondage* (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin, 1791), 13.

115. William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, a Poem. Part the First* (Philadelphia: Joseph James, 1788), 19, 9.

116. As Brycchan Carey argues, attacking "false sensibility" was a common trope in the rhetoric of sensibility and thus should not be interpreted as a rejection of sensibility. See Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760–1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56, 74, 93.

117. For an analysis of "spectatorial aloofness" in the operation of sympathy see Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 43–56. This differentiation of spectator and victim becomes critical in antislavery works because of the persistent moral focus on spectators and agents.

118. Quoted in August von Kotzebue, *The Negro Slaves, a Dramatic-Historical Piece, in Three Acts* (London: Printed for T. Cadell Jr., and W. Davies, and J. Edwards, 1796), title page.

119. Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, upon Slave-Keeping,* 15–16.

120. As Glenn Hendler points out, sympathy was an act of identification that worked through the eyes of the observer. Sympathy articulated a private experience as something social; novels created a "publicly oriented form of subjectivity." See Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), esp. 3–22. Hendler's focus on sympathy as a public sentiment sheds light on why some Americans were particularly worried about the sight of cruelty on the public character. Saidiya Hartman similarly argues that sympathy relies on the obliteration of the sympathetic object; it reduces black bodies to evidence and a "thingly" quality. See Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

121. George Whitefield, *Three Letters from the Rev. Mr. G. Whitefield: viz. Letter I. To a Friend in London, Concerning Archbishop Tillotson. Letter II. To the Same, on the*

Same Subject. Letter III. To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina, Concerning Their Negroes (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 12; Alexander Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield*, 2nd. ed. (Boston: T. Fleet, 1740), 51. Garden more willingly accepted Whitefield's condemnation of the lack of religious education.

122. "Trials of Negroes Sukey, Sue, Hazard, &c. &c. &c.," Aug. 29, 1798, John Ewing Colhoun Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina (hereafter SCL).

123. Richard Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture; or, A Defence of the West-India Planters, from the Aspersions Thrown Out Against Them, by the Author of a Pamphlet, Entitled, "An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, upon Slavekeeping"* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1773), title page. Nisbet probably referred to Benjamin Rush. Note also the subtitle of Gordon Turnbull's proslavery treatise: *The West-India Planters Vindicated from the Charge of Inhumanity;* see also Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery*, 17.

124. Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 48.

125. Nisbet, *Slavery not Forbidden by Scripture*, 16.

126. John Lloyd to E. H. Champion, June 14, 1796, transcript, John Lloyd Papers, SCL; John Brown to Moses Brown, Nov. 27, 1786, Moses Brown Papers, sec. 1.84, RIHS.

127. Christopher Brown argues that in the context of the American Revolution, rebelling Americans (and their British sympathizers) and their British opponents tried to pin the guilt for slavery—and the slave trade—upon each other as a way to undermine the other's claims about freedom; in doing so, they helped create the notion that *someone* was to blame for slavery. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), chap. 2. Continued competition between Britain and America (especially during the War of 1812) fueled accusations of inhumanity, helping to increase the moral importance of such charges.

128. Swift, *An Oration on Domestic Slavery*, 17; see also James Dana, *The African Slave Trade: A Discourse Delivered in the City of New-Haven, September 9, 1790, Before the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom* (New Haven, CT: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1791), 30–31.

129. Crèvecœur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, 222.

130. Ibid., 216.

131. [Lee], *An Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America*, 25, 30, 46.

132. John Brown to Moses Brown, Nov. 27, 1786, Moses Brown Papers, sec. 1.84, RIHS.

133. [Theodore Parsons and Eliphalet Pearson], *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans, Held at the Public Commencement in Cambridge, New-England, July 21st, 1773* (Boston: John Boyle for Thomas Leverett, 1773), 31, 26.

134. Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery*, 55.

135. William Knox, *Three Tracts Respecting the Conversion and Instruction of the*

Free Indians, and Negroe Slaves in the Colonies. Addressed to the Venerable Society for Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ([London? 1768?]), 23–24.

136. Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery,* 11, 22.

137. Thomas Thompson, *The African Trade for Negro Slaves, Shewn to Be Consistent with Principles of Humanity and with the Laws of Revealed Religion* (Canterbury: Simmons and Kirkby, [1772?]), 21; Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery,* 11.

138. Thompson, *The African Trade for Negro Slaves,* 22–23.

139. Parsons and Pearson, *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans,* 26.

140. In 1793 Thomas Day quoted Michel Adanson's *Voyage to Senegal:* "the whole revived in my mind the idea of our first parents" (Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro, a Poem by the Late Thomas Day and John Bicknell, Esquire. To Which Is Added, a Fragment of a Letter on the Slavery of the Negroes* [London: John Stockdale, 1793], 32).

141. See Jonathan Sassi, "Anthony Benezet's African Library: African Travel Narratives and Revolutionary-Era Antislavery" (paper presented at the Early Modern Travel Narrative: Production and Consumption conference, University of Southern California, May 1, 2004).

142. See Noll, *America's God,* 102–3.

143. Parsons and Pearson, *A Forensic Dispute on the Legality of Enslaving the Africans,* 29, 31, 39–40.

144. Final Minutes, Sept. 4, 1793; Aug. 6, 1794; Aug. 3, 1796; July 9, 1800, in Final Minutes, 1792–1801, Cliosophic Society Archives, Box 1, PUA.

145. George Boulukos recently argued that ameliorationist novels and arguments were proslavery in intent; writers intended to make slavery more humane and thus more palatable and durable to an audience "that rejected [slavery] instinctively." While Boulukos is right to highlight the strong proslavery potential of ameliorationist arguments, we should not conflate criticism of slavery with calls for emancipation. As Markman Ellis argues, a bipolar division between antislavery and proslavery writers is inadequate to categorize the diversity of eighteenth-century positions on slavery, when the debate was not framed as a debate between slavery and abolition. My aim is not to show the proslavery or antislavery credentials of amelioration; rather, my point is that the languages of cruelty, humaneness, and amelioration cannot be neatly categorized as *either* proslavery or antislavery. Rather, humaneness was an ambivalent language that defined the status quo of slavery as a problem, but it did not necessarily entail emancipationist sentiments or deep concern about black rights, dignity, or equality. See George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 231, 140; and Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility,* 87.

146. See Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament,* 286–87.

147. See Melish, *Disowning Slavery,* 50–118.

148. James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: James Phillips, 1784), 290–91.

149. Walke, "Short Remarks on Slavery, & the Treatment of Negroes," 47.

150. Nisbet, *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture,* 13–14.

151. For this ambivalence see Melish, *Disowning Slavery;* and John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), esp. 225–67.

152. John Leland, "Circular Letter of Valediction on Leaving Virginia," April 1791, Robert Carter Papers, vol. 16, 71, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library. See also Kenneth M. Stampp, ed., *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution Through the Civil War,* ser. F, *Selections from the Manuscript Department, Duke University Library,* F-3, reel 32.

153. Thomas Fairfax to Battaile Muse, Dec. [1], 1792, Battaile Muse Papers, Duke.

154. John Lloyd to E. H. Champion, June 14, 1796, transcript, John Lloyd Papers, SCL. Lloyd had fifty-one slaves when he died in 1807. See Estate inventory, Jan. 9, 1808, John Lloyd Papers.

155. William Lee to Mr. Ellis, June 24, 1778, William Lee Letterbooks, Lee Family Papers, sec. 115, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

156. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 257–300.

157. William Lee to Robert Carter Nicholas, March 6, 1775, William Lee Letterbooks, Lee Family Papers, sec. 114, VHS.

158. Littlebury Apperson to Robert Carter III, May 4, 1792, sec. 22, f. 1., Carter Family Papers, VHS.

159. Ibid.

160. Thomas Fairfax to Battaile Muse, April 3, 1793, Battaile Muse Papers, Duke. See also Fairfax to Muse, Dec. [1], 1792, Battaile Muse Papers, Duke.

161. J. S. Smith, *A Letter from Capt. J. S. Smith to the Revd Mr Hill on the State of the Negroe Slaves,* edited by James Ramsay (London: J. Phillips, 1786), 14–15.

162. See Melish, *Disowning Slavery,* esp. 84–162.

163. John Leland, "Circular Letter of Valediction on Leaving Virginia," April 1791, Robert Carter Papers, Duke, vol. 16, 74; *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Planters,* F-3, Reel 32.

164. George Ritter, *A Speech Delivered on the 13th January 1802, Before the Society, Called the Proficuous Judicatory, Concerning the Advantages That Would Be Derived from a Total Abolition of Slavery* (Philadelphia: for the author, 1802), 17–18, 10–11.

165. [Benjamin Rush], *A Vindication of the Address, to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements, on the Slavery of the Negroes in America, in Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled, "Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture"; or, A Defence of the West-India Planters from the Aspersions Thrown Out Against Them by the Author of the Address* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1773), 20–21; St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery with a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It in the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1796), 67.

CHAPTER THREE: Moral Responsibility and Removal, 1800–1832

1. Historians have debated the pro- or antislavery credentials (and the success or failure) of colonization and gradualism. In contrast I aim to show how colonizationists' rhetoric of victimhood and humaneness reshaped *both* proslavery and antislavery arguments about humaneness. Thus, what is important is the fluidity of early nineteenth-century positions on slavery; it is difficult to retrofit positions staked later in the debate. For an argument for the antislavery credentials of colonization and gradualism see P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816–1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); and Vivien Elizabeth Sandlund, " 'To Arouse and Awaken the American People': The Ideas and Strategies of the Gradual Emancipationists, 1800–1850" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1995). Eric A. Burin argues that although southern support for colonization was not motivated by abolitionist sentiment, manumitters were "ambivalent participants" in slavery. They often saw colonization as a way to maintain their economic interests and control over slaves while simultaneously relieving their guilt for slavery. Many manumitters thus resorted to emancipation and colonization in their wills. See Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 24–56, esp. 41, 53–54. For a challenge to colonization's antislavery credentials see Douglas R. Egerton, " 'Its Origin Is Not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (winter 1975): 463–80. For a recent argument that ameliorationists should be viewed as proslavery see George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 140, 231.

2. George M. Fredrickson argues that economics and fears for white safety—not black suffering—motivated colonizationists; they viewed blacks as an inassimilable threat to white safety. Yet these motives were not mutually exclusive; it was precisely blacks' status as victims that made them threatening. See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (1971; repr., Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 1–42.

3. See Thomas Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa* (Philadelphia: for author by John W. Scott, 1804), 59–68; and Robert Walsh, *An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Mitchell, Ames, and White, 1819), 302.

4. Humanitas, *Reflections on Slavery, with Recent Evidence of Its Inhumanity. Occasioned by the Melancholy Death of Romain, a French Negro* (Philadelphia: for the author by R. Cochran, 1802), 35.

5. Ibid., 32.

6. See Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London: E. Taylor,

1808), 53; James Thomson, *The Seasons: A Poem* (London: n.p., 1783), 77; and Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), 39.

7. Peter Williams, *An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Delivered in the African Church, in the City of New York, January 1, 1808* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1808), 18–19, 16–17.

8. Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa*, 83–84.

9. Ibid., 81, 55–56, 65–67, 79.

10. Ibid., 84.

11. For Branagan's role in early nineteenth-century antislavery gradualism see Sandlund, " 'To Arouse and Awaken the American People,' " 108–75.

12. Rachel Hope Cleves argues provocatively that the gruesome character of early nineteenth-century rhetoric about slavery's violence derived from the anti-Jacobin rhetoric surrounding the Terror during the French Revolution. Although I do not agree that violence played only a minor or secondary role in antislavery before the Terror (cannibalistic imagery and depictions of traders as tigers were not new in post-Terror antislavery), Cleves is right that the rhetoric of the late 1790s and early 1800s did grow noticeably more gruesome. This rhetoric, as Cleves notes, aimed at striking horror in the hearts of readers and observers. See Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 131–32, 141–43.

13. John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America, from the year 1772 to 1777*, 2 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1796), 1:plate 35. A cheap variation of Stedman's narrative, with much less elaborate engravings but a similarly sexualized picture of a female whipping, was also made. See Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 234–39.

14. Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, 1:325.

15. Ibid., 1:109–10, pl. 11; 2:295–99, pl. 35.

16. The first run of the slave-ship engraving was eighty-seven hundred. See Wood, *Blind Memory*, 16–36; Alexander Anderson, *Injured Humanity; Being a Representation of What the Unhappy Children of Africa Endure from Those Who Call Themselves Christians* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1805), repr. in Wood, *Blind Memory*, 224; and Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant; or, Slave Trader Reformed: A Pathetic Poem, in Four Cantos*, 2nd ed. (New York: Samuel Wood, 1807), 261–74, 270.

17. Patrick Henry to Robert Pleasants, Jan. 18, 1773, handwritten copy, Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 8, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford).

18. John Coakley Lettsom to William Thornton, London, Feb. 19, 1787, Reel 1, William Thornton Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter LC).

19. Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade*, 374–75.

20. Ibid., 376.
21. Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant,* 58–59.
22. Ibid., 7, 16.
23. Ibid., 21.
24. Ibid., 69.
25. Williams, *An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade,* 18.
26. William W. Moore to Enoch Lewis, July 18, 1825, Meeting for Sufferings-Miscellaneous (hereafter MS-Misc), coll. 1250, C3.3, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (hereafter PYM), Quaker Collection, Haverford; Alexander McLeod, *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable: A Discourse* (1802; repr., Glasgow: Stephen Young, 1804), 12, 34. See also A Philadelphian [Robert Walsh?], *Free Remarks on the Spirit of the Federal Constitution, the Practice of the Federal Government, and the Obligations of the Union, Respecting the Exclusion of Slavery from the Territories and News States* (Philadelphia: A. Finley, 1819), 99.
27. Francis Hall, *Travels in Canada, and the United States, in 1816 and 1817* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 319.
28. Nathaniel S. Prime, *The Year of Jubilee; but Not to Africans: A Discourse, Delivered July 4th, 1825, Being the 49th Anniversary of American Independence* (Salem, NY: Dodd and Stevenson, 1825), 13.
29. Jefferson used *tyranny* rather than *cruelty,* but his echoes interpreted it in the context of cruelty. See Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* edited by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 162; and Hall, *Travels in Canada, and the United States, in 1816 and 1817,* 354.
30. Jonathan Evans, Thomas Wistar, Samuel Emlen, and Enoch Lewis, circular letter, May 30, 1825, MS-Misc, C3.3, PYM.
31. MS-North Carolina to MS-Philadelphia, Nov. 6, 1833, MS-Misc, C4.1, PYM.
32. See Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 17.
33. "To the Meeting for Sufferings" [Committee Report on Survey? 1825?], MS-Misc, C 3.3, item 1, PYM.
34. Edward Coles to N. B. [Nicholas Biddle?], April 6, 1815, extract, Edward Coles Papers, Box 1, f. 15, Manuscript Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries (hereafter RBSC-PUL).
35. Cary O'Neale, Memoirs (1872), 68, 82, Memoirs of John O'Neale, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library (hereafter Duke).
36. See "Governor Coles' Speech," clipping, n.d., scrapbook, Edward Coles Papers, Box 3, f. 3, RBSC-PUL; Coles to Nicholas Biddle, April 22, 1823, Coles Papers, Box 1, f. 21, RBSC-PUL.
37. In his analysis of the sectional conflicts leading up to and including the Missouri Compromise, Matthew Mason notes that the threat of northward expansion of slavery in the Northwest helped fuel the conflict over Missouri. Northwestern opposition, he contends, developed in part because migrants "sought distance from slavery but could not attain it" (Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the*

Early American Republic [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006], 149–56, 156).

38. See, e.g., Moses Brown to Clark & Nightingale, Aug. 26, 1783, copy, Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society (hereafter RIHS). (See also chap. 1 herein.)

39. Susan Blanding to Blanding Family, Dec. 2, 1808, William Blanding Papers, South Caroliniana Library (hereafter SCL).

40. Samuel J. May, *A Discourse on Slavery in the United States, Delivered in Brooklyn, July 3, 1831* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), 5.

41. As Joanne Pope Melish notes, New Englanders revised their own history to emphasize the brevity and mildness of New England slavery. See Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 210.

42. Prime, *The Year of Jubilee; but Not to Africans*, 21.

43. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 163.

44. See Wood, *Blind Memory*, 224.

45. Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa*, frontispiece.

46. Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant*, 22.

47. Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa*, 133–64.

48. David Barrow, *Involuntary, Unmerited, Perpetual, Absolute, Hereditary Slavery Examined; on the Principles of Nature, Reason, Justice, Policy, and Scripture* (Lexington, KY: E. and C. Bradford, 1808), 17–18.

49. Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa*, 16–17.

50. *Rules of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. Mortimer, 1828), 72.

51. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 163.

52. See E. Millicent Sowerby, *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1952–59), 2:61–62, 4:522–24.

53. Thomas Jefferson to Rufus King, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Paul Leicester Ford, vol. 8, *1801–1806* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 161.

54. Thomas Jefferson to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814, Coles Papers, Box 1, f. 14, RBSC-PUL.

55. Michael Johnson suggests that the Vesey conspiracy was imagined by whites. What is most important for my purposes is that such conspiracies—whether real or imagined—hit a nerve in 1822. See Michael Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Coconspirators," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (Oct. 2001): 915–76. For responses see "Forum: The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, Part 2," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Jan. 2002): 135–202; see also Richard C. Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Southern History* 30 (1964): 144–61; and William W. Freehling, "Denmark Vesey's Antipaternalistic Reality," in *The Reintegration of Ameri-*

can History: Slavery and the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 34–58.

56. R[achel] Blanding to Hanna Lewis, July 4, 1816; July 25, 1816, William Blanding Papers, SCL.

57. Humanitas, *Reflections on Slavery, with Recent Evidence of Its Inhumanity,* 8.

58. Henry Clay, *An Address Delivered to the Colonization Society of Kentucky, at Frankfort, December 17, 1829, by the Hon. Henry Clay, at the Request of the Board of Managers* (Lexington, KY: Thomas Smith, 1829), 12.

59. Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade,* 20–21.

60. Thomas Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances, Addressed to the Citizens of the Northern States, and Their Representatives: Being an Appeal to Their Natural Feelings & Common Sense, Consisting of Speculations and Animadversions, on the Recent Revival of the Slave Trade, in the American Republic* (Philadelphia: Thomas T. Stiles, 1805), 26, 39, 43, 46.

61. As Joanne Pope Melish argues, white New Englanders saw emancipation as removing both the sin of slavery and the physical presence of blacks. See Melish, *Disowning Slavery,* esp. 163. Melish did not explicitly analyze victimhood, but the tendency to define blacks as perpetual victims (who embodied white cruelty) reinforced this trend; whites associated removing victims with removing their cruelty.

62. This element of colonization is often (justly) labeled racist; this is both fair and useful, but this label obscures whites' analytical reliance on victimhood. Victimhood helped construct a narrative logic for objecting to the presence of blacks. See Egerton, "Its Origin Is Not a Little Curious," 463–80; and Sandlund, " 'To Arouse and Awaken the American People,' " esp. 113.

63. Mathew Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society with a View of Its Probable Results,* 2nd. ed. ([Philadelphia]: Young, 1832), 14–15.

64. Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances, Addressed to the Citizens of the Northern States, and Their Representatives,* 92.

65. Ibid., 16.

66. Ibid., 92.

67. [Walsh?], *Free Remarks on the Spirit of the Federal Constitution,* 98.

68. Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society with a View of Its Probable Results,* 4.

69. Freeborn Garretson, *A Dialogue Between Do-Justice and Professing Christian* (1805; repr., Wilmington: Peter Brynberg, 1810), 24–25. In Branagan's retelling, Quashi, who had never been whipped and who took pride in his smooth skin, was to be punished without cause. Quashi cut his own throat rather than kill the slaveholder, "bathing him in his blood" (Branagan, *A Preliminary Essay on the Oppression of the Exiled Sons of Africa,* 112–16). An early version appeared in James Ramsay, *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: James Phillips, 1784), 251–54.

70. For a discussion of the tension within antislavery fiction between depictions of enslaved men as potentially violent and vengeful or passive, childlike, and loyal,

see Sarah N. Roth, "The Mind of a Child: Images of African-Americans in Early Juvenile Fiction," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 1 (2005): 79–109.

71. Jedidiah Morse, *A Discourse Delivered at the African Meeting-House, in Boston, July 14, 1808, in Grateful Celebration of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade, by the Governments of the United States, Great Britain and Denmark* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1808), 17–18.

72. [Hannah More], *The Sorrows of Yamba; or, The Negro Woman's Lamentation* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1819), 4–5. Although originally published in 1795, the poem was reprinted extensively in the early nineteenth century.

73. Humanitas, *Reflections on Slavery, with Recent Evidence of Its Inhumanity,* 40.

74. William Meade, ed., *Sermons Addressed to Masters and Servants, and Published in the Year 1743, by the Rev. Thomas Bacon, Minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland. Now Republished with Other Tracts and Dialogues on the Same Subject, and Recommended to All Masters and Mistresses to Be Used in Their Families* (Winchester, VA: John Heiskell, 1813), 183.

75. Thomas Eddy to Thomas P. Cope, July 29, 1824, Thomas P. Cope Papers, coll. 1013, Box C, Haverford.

76. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* 38.

77. For an analysis of white claims for the benevolence of Indian removal see Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 30. In her analysis of sympathy in fictional depictions of the "Indian Question," Laura L. Mielke likewise emphasizes the "ideological adaptability of sentimental rhetoric" (Laura L. Mielke, *Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Literature* [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008], 10).

78. Andrew Jackson, "Second Annual Message. December 7, 1830," in *Messages of Gen. Andrew Jackson: With a Short Sketch of His Life* (Concord, NH: John F. Brown and William White, 1837), 114.

79. James Henry Hammond, "An Oration Delivered in the Presbyterian Church on the Fourth of July 1829," Hammond Papers, Reel 1, LC.

80. Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances,* 24.

81. See Matt. 27:24–26.

82. Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson,* 8:104–6, 153.

83. Paul Cuffe to John Kizell, Aug. 14, 1816, in *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808–1817: A Black Quaker's "Voice from Within the Veil,"* edited by Rosalind Cobb Wiggins (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996), 443. For Paul Cuffe's work on colonization see Lamont D. Thomas, *Rise to Be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

84. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty,* 31.

85. Eric Burin identified at least 560 individuals who collectively emancipated and colonized approximately six thousand slaves. See Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution,* 2.

86. See, e.g., Josephus Wheaton, *The Equality of Mankind and the Evils of Slavery, Illustrated: A Sermon, Delivered on the Day of the Annual Fast, April 6, 1820* (Boston: for Samuel T. Armstrong by Crocker and Brewster, 1820), esp. 12–18.

87. "Art. VI.—The Eleventh Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States, with an Appendix," *American Quarterly Review* 8, no. 4 (Dec. 1828): 395.

88. L. H. S., "Appeal to New England for Missions to Africa," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 1829): 31.

89. "Fourth of July," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 3 (May 1829): 89.

90. "Resolutions of State Legislatures," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 9 (Nov. 1829): 302. Despite the willingness of Northerners to accept a share of blame for slavery, such resolutions sparked waves of protests (beginning in 1824) in the Lower South—where support for colonization was weakest—because they were seen as a call for federal interference in slavery. See Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 303, 314.

91. A Citizen of New-York, *Remarks upon a Plan for the Total Abolition of Slavery in the United States* (New York: S. Hoyt, [1833?]), 14.

92. Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society with a View of Its Probable Results;* this image is reproduced from the 4th edition. The picture initially appeared in Robert Walsh's discussion of the slave trade in *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829* (Boston: Richardson, Lord, and Holbrook, 1831). By showing close-ups of the cramped bodies, the image departed from conventions of displaying the slave trade. See also Wood, *Blind Memory,* 16–40. William Lloyd Garrison also used the image in his attack on colonization; see William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: Or an Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles, and Purposes of the American Colonization Society* (1832; facs. repr., New York: Arno, 1968), frontispiece.

93. "Legislature of Pennsylvania," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 2 (April 1829): 61.

94. "Art. VI.—The Eleventh Annual Report," 423.

95. Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society with a View of Its Probable Results,* 3.

96. "Art. VI.—The Eleventh Annual Report," 421–22; William James Allinson to "brother" [1835], Allinson Family Papers, Box 5, Haverford; Clegg, *The Price of Liberty,* 23.

97. Minutes, Jan. 16, 1826, 31, Records of the American Colonization Society, Virginia Branch, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

98. Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society with a View of Its Probable Results,* 6–7.

99. See, e.g., J. Wicksan to Mary Blackford, [1830], Blackford Family Papers, no. 1912, f. 6, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC).

100. Minutes, Jan. 16, 1826, 30, Records of the American Colonization Society,

Virginia Branch, VHS; for similar language see "Address of the Kentucky Colonization Society," *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 1829): 28.

101. James Madison to Edward Coles, Sept. 3, 1819, Edward Coles Papers, Box 1, f. 19, RBSC-PUL.

102. For the role of the revolution in sparking rivalries over slavery see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

103. For British-American propaganda battles over slavery more broadly around the War of 1812 see Matthew Mason, "The Battle of the Slaveholding Liberators: Great Britain, the United States, and Slavery in the Early Nineteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 2002): 665–96; and Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic,* 87–105.

104. Walsh, *An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America,* 302, 341.

105. Ibid., 309, 310.

106. Ibid., 319–20.

107. Ibid., 409–11.

108. Ibid., 319.

109. Ibid., vi.

110. Heman Humphrey, *Parallel Between Intemperance and the Slave-Trade* ([New York]: John P. Haven, [1828–32?], 8–9.

111. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, *An Address Delivered in Charleston, Before the Agricultural Society of South-Carolina, at Its Anniversary Meeting, on Tuesday, the 18th [of] August, 1829,* 2nd ed. (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1829), 3–4, Duke.

112. Ibid., 4–5, 17.

113. Ibid., 9.

114. Review of *An Address Delivered in Charleston, Before the Agricultural Society of South-Carolina, at Its Anniversary Meeting, on Tuesday, the 18th [of] August, 1829,* by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 11 (Jan. 1830): 331.

115. *Kentucky Farmer,* vol. 1, no. 13, Sept. 18, 1824, 105, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY (hereafter FHS).

116. William Thornton to John Quincy Adams, Feb., 17, 1820, William Thornton Papers, Reel 3, LC; William Thornton, *Political Economy: Founded in Justice and Humanity, in a Letter to a Friend* (Washington: Samuel Harrison Smith, 1804), 9, William Thornton Papers, Reel 5, LC.

117. Copy of the Memorial of the Petersburg [Virginia] Auxiliary Colonization Society, Jan. 5, 1827, American Colonization Society, Reel 1, LC.

118. Samuel Miller, *A Discourse, Delivered April 12, 1797, at the Request of and Before the New-York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves, and Protecting Such of Them as Have Been or May Be Liberated* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1797), 7.

119. Origen Sibley to Ralph Gurley, June 9, 1827, American Colonization Society Papers, Reel 2, LC.

120. Thomas Jefferson to Edward Coles, Aug. 25, 1814, Edward Coles Papers, Box 1, f. 14, RBSC-PUL.

121. *The Practicability of the Abolition of Slavery: A Lecture, Delivered at the Lyceum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, February, 1831* (New York: J. Seymour, 1831), 12.

122. Ray Clarke to Obadiah M. Brown, March 9, 1819, Obadiah M. Brown Papers, Box 1, f. 6, RIHS.

123. Walsh, *An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America*, 406, 408.

124. Jonathan Evans, Thomas Wistar, Samuel Emlen, and Enoch Lewis, circular letter, May 30, 1825, MS-Misc, C3.3, PYM.

125. William Moore to Enoch Lewis, July 18, 1825, MS-Misc, C3.3, PYM.

126. Reuben Legett to William Newbold, Nov. 5, 1825, MS-Misc, C3.3, PYM.

127. Ray Clarke to Obadiah M. Brown, March 9, 1819, Obadiah M. Brown Papers, Box 1, f. 6, RIHS. "Cat-o'-nine-tails" or "Cat" were common names for a whip.

128. Peter Wainwright to Mother and Sister, March 2, 1815, Wainwright Papers, Duke.

129. Articles of Agreement Between Alexander Scott Bullitt and Allen Campbell, Sept. 24, 1802, copy, Bullitt Family Papers, f. 37, FHS. Similar agreements dated Sept. 1, 1807; Sept. 25, 1809; Sept. 1, 1811; Sept. 22, 1813; and Oct. 4, 1815, can be found in the Bullitt Family Papers, f. 39–40, FHS.

130. See, e.g., H. H. Townes to [George F. Townes] and Ben Lomand, March 27, 1831, Townes Family Papers, SCL; Robert W. Mackay to George Mackay, March 10, 1825, Mackay Family Papers, SCL; and James Chestnut to Richard Singleton, July 17, 1832, James Chestnut Papers, SCL.

131. Thomas Cooper to Board of Trustees of South Carolina College, April 22, 1821, Thomas Cooper Papers, SCL; Archibald Ritchie to Eliza Roane Ruffin, Feb. 8, 1830, Frank G. Ruffin Papers, no. 640, SHC.

132. David Ross to Robert Richardson, April 30, 1812, David Ross Letterbook, VHS.

133. David Ross to Robert Richardson, Jan. 5, [1813], David Ross Letterbook, VHS.

CHAPTER FOUR: Politicizing Humaneness, 1832–1839

1. William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: Or an Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles and Purposes of the American Colonization Society. Together with the Resolutions and Remonstrances of the Free People of Color* (1832; facs. repr., New York: Arno, 1968), 79.

2. From a modern perspective it is tempting to categorize all opponents of abolition as proslavery, since arguments against immediatism often effectively meant perpetuating slavery. However, we should not conflate antislavery and abolitionism; in antebellum America, opposition to immediate abolition served a wide array of

ideological positions on slavery, and it is problematic to categorize those with serious reservations about slavery as "proslavery" based solely on their opposition to immediate, universal abolition. Such a distinction works only when the debate is framed as a debate between abolition and perpetual slavery, and other critics of slavery rejected that simple bifurcation. Cf. Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

3. Robert Julius Gage, lecture notes, Moral Philosophy, Robert Henry, 1831, Robert Julius Gage Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina (hereafter SCL).

4. Matthew Richey, *Effective Benevolence Inculcated by Our Lord's Example: A Sermon Preached in Trinity Church, on Wednesday Evening, March 23d, 1831, in Order to Promote the Objects of the Methodist Benevolent Society of Charleston, So. Ca.* (Charleston, SC: J. S. Burges, 1831), 12, 11.

5. Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 92–113.

6. My characterization of Paley as a utilitarian echoes Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (1900; London: School of Economics and Political Science, 1950); Martha McMackin Garland, *Cambridge Before Darwin: The Ideal of a Liberal Education, 1800–1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 56; and Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000), 16.

7. William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (New York: Garland, 1978), 60.

8. Lewis Tappan, Journal, Oct. 22, 1816, Lewis Tappan Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter LC).

9. Thomas Upham to Alva Woods, March 22, 1833, Francis Wayland Family Papers, X.154, Brown University Library (hereafter Brown).

10. For a description of instructional methods in early Princeton see Ashbel Green, *The Life of the Revd John Witherspoon D.D., LL.D. with a Brief Review of His Writings: and a Summary Estimate of His Character and Talent*, edited by Henry Lyttleton Savage (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 125–26.

11. At Princeton, for example, students read *Natural Theology* well into the nineteenth century; see *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the College of New Jersey for the Academical Year 1855–6* (Princeton, NJ: John T. Robinson, 1856), Princeton University Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries (hereafter PUA). *Natural Theology* was explicitly listed in most catalogues for the College of New Jersey between 1825 and 1856; earlier catalogues are less detailed.

12. G. B. Emerson to [Lewis Tappan], May 10, 1825, Lewis Tappan Papers, Reel 6, LC.

13. Theodore Clapp, *Slavery: A Sermon, Delivered in the First Congregational Church in New Orleans, April 15, 1838* (New Orleans: John Gibson, True American Office, 1838), 4.

14. Benjamin R. Stuart, lecture notes, "The Fundamental Principles of Morals"

[1853], sec. I.1 and III.5, in James Henley Thornwell Papers, SCL. For a similar indictment of Paley see *Review of Paley's Moral Philosophy* (n.p., n.d), SCL.

15. Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science,* edited by Joseph L. Blau ([1837]; Cambridge, MA: Belknap University Press, 1963), 100. Quotations, except where noted, come from the 1837 edition.

16. Antebellum moral philosophers did break with Paley on issues of moral motivation, but overemphasizing the question of duty hides their broader agreement with Paley. Cf. Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers Before the Civil War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1956), chap. 3.

17. Francis Wayland to Basil Manly, March 13, 1839, Francis Wayland Family Papers, II.32, Brown.

18. Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science,* 100.

19. Ibid., 108–9.

20. Charles Grandison Finney, "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts," in *Sermons on Important Subjects* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), 10; Finney, "How to Change Your Heart," in ibid., 40–44.

21. For the gradual shift from personal reform to wider social reform see Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

22. In his comparison of Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, with Washtenaw County, Michigan, John W. Quist shows not only that Southerners—including slaveholders—engaged in reform efforts but also that these reform efforts were "fundamentally similar" to northern ones. See John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 463.

23. Francis Wayland to Eliphalet Nott, March 24, 1839, Wayland Family Papers, III.6, Brown; see also Heb. 4:15.

24. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), esp. chap. 3.

25. Quoted in [Mathew Carey] *A Plea for the Poor, Particularly Females* (1837), in *The Jacksonians on the Poor: Collected Pamphlets* (New York: Arno, 1971), 14.

26. *The Generous Planter and His Carpenter, Ben* (Worcester: Henry J. Howland, 1837), 19; this children's story was first printed in *The Anti-Slavery Record* in 1835.

27. As Elizabeth B. Clark argues, abolitionists tried to stabilize reactions by setting forth expectations of sympathy rather than sadistic pleasure. See Elizabeth B. Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sept. 1995): 463–93, esp. 486.

28. "The Starling," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 4 [c. 1836]: 3; "The Poor Wife," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 12 [c. 1836]: 6–7; "The Wicked Slave-Holder," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 12 [c. 1836]: 9–10.

29. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1837* (Boston: N. Southard and D. C. Hitchcock, [1837]), 43.

30. "Sugar, and Rice, and Cotton," *Slave's Friend* 2, no. 1 [1836 or 1837]: 7; "The Cart-Whip," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 4 [1836]: 6; *Slave's Friend* 2, no. 14 [c. 1837]: 1.

31. See "The Cart Whip," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 4 [c. 1836]: 6. There is no indication when the coloring was done. See copy in Duke.

32. Theodore Dwight Weld to Angelina Grimké Weld, Jan. 15, 1842, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* edited by Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Duman (New York: Appleton-Century, 1934), 892.

33. Elizabeth Buffum Chace, Journal, winter 1837/1838, Elizabeth Buffum Chace Papers, Box 5, Brown.

34. Quoted in Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age in the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839), 55–56.

35. See Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science,* 340.

36. Humanitarians faced challenges, as Karen Halttunen argues, because depictions of cruelty had a strong voyeuristic quality; spectatorship risked becoming either illicitly exciting or desensitizing and corrupting. See Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 324–30.

37. On cruelty to animals see James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

38. "The Young Tyrant," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 12 [c. 1836]: 15.

39. *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 6 [c. 1836]: 7; see also Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast,* 13.

40. "The Worm," *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 5 [c. 1836]: inside front cover.

41. William Cowper, quoted in *Slave's Friend* 2, no. 14 [c. 1837]: 16.

42. *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 5 [c. 1836]: 10.

43. John P. Richardson to Richard Singleton, Feb. 23, 1838, f. 118, Singleton Family Papers, no. 668, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC).

44. William Watkins, Jacob M. Moore, and Jacob C. White Sr., "Address" [Nov. 1836], in *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* edited by C. Peter Ripley, 5 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985–92), 3:193.

45. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1839* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, n.d.), 20; see also Heb. 13:3.

46. "The Sugar-Plums," *Genius of Universal Emancipation,* repr. in *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 6 [c. 1836]: 9.

47. *Slave's Friend* 2, no. 2 [c. 1836]: 7.

48. American Anti-Slavery Society form letter to Theodore Dwight Weld [1833], in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 125.

49. For this strategy see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), esp. chaps. 6–7. I disagree, however, with the contention that emotional rhetoric was new in the 1830s.

50. "What Can We Do?" *Slave's Friend* [1], no. 3 [c. 1836]: 9.

51. John Greenleaf Whittier to Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Aug. 14, 1837, American Friends Letters, Box 18, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford). Whittier's phrasing echoes Adam Smith's suggestion that selfishness and distance both reduced sympathy for sufferers: "If he was to lose his little finger tomorrow, he would not sleep to-night; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren [in China], and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own" (Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie [1976; repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984], 136–37).

52. Theodore Dwight Weld, *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839; repr., New York: Arno, 1968), 185–87.

53. James Henry Hammond, *Remarks of Mr. Hammond, of South Carolina, on the Question of Receiving Petitions for the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia. Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 1, 1836* (Washington, DC: Duff Green, [1836]), 6.

54. James Henry Hammond, Lecture Notes from Robert Henry, Moral Philosophy, March 6, 1823, Lecture Book, 1822–25, James Henry Hammond Papers, SCL. Hammond later clipped a review of a book detailing the animal cruelty in ancient Roman cuisine, such as roasting a goose alive. See Hammond, Scrapbook 1825–1840, Hammond Papers, SCL. Antislavery writers likewise pointed to ancient practices of torturing animals to make them taste better. See Committee of the Synod of Kentucky, *An Address to the Presbyterians of Kentucky, Proposing a Plan for the Instruction and Emancipation of Their Slaves* (Newburyport, MA: Charles Whipple, 1836), 13.

55. Thomas S. Clay, *Detail of a Plan for the Moral Improvement of Negroes on Plantations* (Printed at the request of the [Georgia] Presbytery, 1833), 16–17.

56. Charles C[olcock] Jones, *A Catechism for Colored Persons* (Charleston, SC: Observer Office Press, 1834), 93.

57. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* in *Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy,* edited by Henry D. Aiken (New York: Hafner, 1948), 215–17. Daniel Wickberg insightfully stresses the gap between cognitive and emotive visions of sympathy; Smith's sympathy depended on the cognitive processes of imagination rather than a natural contagion of emotion. Wickberg suggests that emotive, rather than cognitive, sympathy provided the basis for humanitarianism and sentimentalism. See Daniel Wickberg, "The Sympathetic Self in American Culture: 1750–1920," in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past,* edited by Wilfred M. McClay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 146–54. Despite the distinctions between cognitive and emotive sympathy in the abstract, Americans often blended the versions in practice. The tensions between the various meanings and interpretations of sympathy exacerbated the politicization of sympathy. Humanitarianism, however, depended on both strains of thinking about sympathy; it is crucial to distinguish humanitarianism from its sentimental (emotive) form.

58. See Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation,* edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 107–60.

59. Quoted in Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age in the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839), 55–56.

60. Richey, *Effective Benevolence Inculcated by Our Lord's Example,* 4.

61. James Henley Thornwell to Alexander H. Pegues, Cambridge, MA, Sept. 11, 1834, James Henley Thornwell Papers, SCL.

62. See chapters 1 and 2 herein. Historians have focused on explaining how sympathy could work over distance. Yet perhaps what needs to be explained is why the structures of sympathy, despite their visual orientation and strong bias toward present sufferers, seemed, in practice, to work better at a distance. See Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility."

63. See Charles Dickens, *Bleak House,* edited by George Ford and Sylvère Monod (New York: Norton, 1977), 34–45. Dickens used the term in reference to Mrs. Jellyby's concern with Africa, to the detriment of her own grubby children.

64. Lucy Kenney, *A Refutation of the Principles of Abolition* (n.p., [183?]), 4, Duke.

65. James Henry Hammond, "Hammond's Letters on Slavery [1845]," in *The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States, Containing the Several Essays, on the Subject of Chancellor Harper, Governor Hammond, Dr. Simms and Professor Dew* (Charleston, SC: Walker, Richards, 1852), 134.

66. Robert Young Hayne and Daniel Webster, *Speeches of Hayne and Webster in the United States Senate, on the Resolution of Mr. Foot, January 1830. Also, Mr. Webster's Celebrated Speech on the Slavery Compromise Bill, March 7, 1850* (Boston: A. T. Hotchkiss and W. P. Fetridge, 1853), 13.

67. Edward R. Laurens, *A Letter to the Hon. Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, of St. John's, Colleton; in Explanation and Defence of "An Act to Amend the Law in Relation to Slaves and Free Persons of Color"* (Charleston, SC: Observer Office Press, 1835), 8.

68. James Kirke Paulding, *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1836), 266. For the relative complacency of antislavery writers about the oppression entailed in the northern capitalist order see Bender, *The Antislavery Debate;* and David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975). For examples of this rhetoric see Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 251.

69. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 22. Smith's version of sympathy, as Daniel Wickberg notes, should not be conflated with sentimentalism, since Smith emphasized the mediation of the cognitive act of imagining. See Wickberg, "The Sympathetic Self in American Culture." Yet Smith's model did structure some—but not all—antislavery sympathy. Children who imagined themselves as worms crushed underfoot, or activists who imagined themselves as slaves, used a model of sympathy that was cognitive but nevertheless sentimental and emotional.

70. See Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 8.

71. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 121.

72. Charles Stuart to Theodore Dwight Weld, Aug. 14, 1843, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 980.

73. Angelina Grimké Weld, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 53, 54.

74. See Weld, *American Slavery as It Is;* and Lydia Maria Child, *The Patriarchal Institution as Described by Members of Its Own Family* (New York: Anti-Slavery Society, 1860).

75. George Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (1834; repr., Detroit: Negro History Press, 1972), 117.

76. Charles Stuart to Theodore Dwight Weld, *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 980.

77. John M. Nelson, quoted in Weld, *American Slavery as It Is,* 51–52. See also Nathaniel Southard, *Why Work for the Slave? Addressed to the Treasurers and Collectors in the Anti-Slavery Cent-a-Week Societies* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838), 11.

78. Weld, *American Slavery as It Is,* 125.

79. Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science,* 65–66.

80. The analysis below is not about how the rise of humaneness in moral thinking changed the actual treatment of enslaved laborers but rather how new moral theories pushed slaveholders to redefine (publicly and privately) the institution of slavery as humane.

81. For a sophisticated analysis of advice literature in agricultural and southern periodicals see James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 153–91. As Oakes shows, this advice literature aimed to modernize and rationalize plantation life. This modernizing, however, also included the demand that slavery fit with a modern stress on humaneness. For slaveholders and proslavery writers who wanted to make slavery defendable (both to themselves and to the outside world), benevolence was crucial. My analysis thus includes sources not important for Oakes, who relied on planters' journals such as *Southern Agriculturalist,* whereas my analysis also includes advice generated in religious and moral contexts.

82. For Jones's crisis over the moral legitimacy of slavery and his interest in antislavery and colonization see Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 82–96.

83. Jones, *A Catechism for Colored Persons,* 93.

84. George W. Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders: Two Discourses Delivered on Sunday, November 27, 1836, in Christ Church, Raleigh, North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: J. Gales and Son, 1836), 26.

85. Ibid., 28–29.

86. Thomas Bacon, *Four Sermons upon the Great and Indispensible [*sic*] Duty of all Christian Masters and Mistresses to Bring Up Their Negro Slaves in the Knowledge and Fear of God. Preached at the Parish Church of St. Peter in Talbot County, in the Province of Maryland* (London: J. Oliver, 1750), 39–40.

87. Clay, *Detail of a Plan for the Moral Improvement of Negroes on Plantations,* 11–12, 14–15.

88. Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders,* 25.

89. Ibid., 29; see also Col. 4:1.

90. Hammond, *Remarks of Mr. Hammond,* 12.

91. S. A. Townes to George Franklin Townes, Aug. 8, 1836; Samuel Townes to George Franklin Townes, Feb. 20, 1837, Townes Family Papers, SCL.

92. Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders,* 29.

93. For an explicit statement see Alfred Oliver Eggleston to John Peter Mettauer, Sept. 27, 1835, John Peter Mettauer Papers, sec. 1, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

94. Historians often rightly highlight the financial motives for such "benevolence." Yet such critiques would not bother proslavery polemicists because they saw economic interest as a strong support for benevolence. The popular idea that morality brought earthly rewards discouraged many Americans from seeing a tension between interests and benevolence. Even antislavery polemicists often appealed to economic interests; rather than accusing slaveholders of acting out of self-interest, abolitionists even stressed that uncontrolled passions overwhelmed the moralizing force of self-interest. See, e.g., Lydia Maria Child, *Anti-Slavery Catechism,* 2nd ed. (Newburyport: Charles Whipple, 1839), 9. For the financial motives of slaveholders' medical care see Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 27.

95. J. Ritchie to Eliza Roane Ruffin, Oct. 9, 1832, Frank G. Ruffin Papers, f. 51, SHC. For an example of slave eulogies see R[odah] Horton to Lucy A. M. Horton, Nov. 23, 1836, in Wyche and Otey Family Papers, no. 1608, f. 2, SHC.

96. John Palfrey to William Palfrey, April 14, 1839, Palfrey Family Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries (hereafter LSU).

97. J. W. Cotton to William Henry Wills, Dec. 26, 1839, f. 4, in the William Henry Wills Papers, no. 792, SHC.

98. Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders,* 28.

99. James Henry Hammond to John Walker, Dec. 27, 1836, Hammond Papers, Reel 3, LC.

100. John Palfrey to William Palfrey, July 16, 1833, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU. Palfrey was the father of the antislavery politician John Gorham Palfrey, who will be discussed in chapter 5. See also Samuel Townes to George Franklin Townes, March 15, 1838, Townes Family Papers, SCL.

101. Clay, *Detail of a Plan for the Moral Improvement of Negroes on Plantations,* 19. For similar advice see Freeman, *The Rights and Duties of Slaveholders,* 28.

102. James Henry Hammond, Plantation Book, Silver Bluff, 1832, Hammond Papers, Reel 18, LC; "Plantation Rules," Plantation Journal, 1840, Andrew Flinn Papers, SCL. For a comparison of Flinn's rules to advice literature see also Oakes, *The Ruling Race*, 164–65. A microfilm copy of Flinn's plantation journal is also available; see Green Valley Plantation Record Book, no. 1057, SHC.

103. James Henry Hammond, Plantation Book, Silver Bluff, 1832, Hammond Papers, Reel 18, LC; Flinn authorized only fifty lashes.

104. Ibid.

105. William Blanding to Rachel Blanding, Nov. 29, 1834, William Blanding Papers, SCL.

106. H. H. Townes to George Franklin Townes, Nov. 14, 1835, Townes Family Papers, SCL.

107. William Harper, *Memoir on Slavery, Read Before the Society for the Advancement of Learning, of South Carolina, at Its Annual Meeting at Columbia, 1837* (Charleston, SC: James S. Burges, 1838), 10, 10–11, 12. Harper argued that utility must extend beyond the "animal wants and enjoyments." Utility was an imperfect standard, but "it is the best we have" (Harper, *Memoir on Slavery,* 12–14).

108. Clapp, *Slavery,* 42.

109. Harper, *Memoir on Slavery,* 20–21. See also Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 166.

110. Harper, *Memoir on Slavery,* 22.

111. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 45.

112. Ibid., 10–11.

113. Ibid., 59.

114. Kenney, *A Refutation of the Principles of Abolition,* 5.

115. [Whitemarsh B. Seabrook], *An Appeal to the People of the Northern and Eastern States, on the Subject of Negro Slavery in South Carolina* (New York: n.p., 1834), 12. See also Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 179.

116. Zephaniah Kingsley, *Balancing Evils Judiciously: The Proslavery Writings of Zephaniah Kingsley,* edited by Daniel W. Stowell (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 40.

117. This modern organic society, premised on the harmony of interests, should be distinguished from an older patriarchal organic society. Defenders of slavery attacked free labor, but, as James Oakes suggests, the premodern, conservative origins of proslavery are overstated; slavery was embedded in the market and structures of capitalism. Critiques of free labor owe more to the proslavery need to defend slavery in terms of humaneness than a commitment to a conservative or precapitalistic society; proslavery writers tried to defend slavery according to modern, humane standards. Strikingly, when proslavery writers attacked northern capitalism, they used moral-philosophical concepts (including sympathy) and principles (such as the idea that self-interest served a moralizing function) that also framed arguments for capitalism. Sympathy, in its broader connotations as fellow-feeling with any passion, grounded Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* as well as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

See James Oakes, *The Ruling Race;* James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Norton, 1990), 40–79; Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 10n; and D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, introduction to Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* 20–25.

118. Harper, 18.

119. See Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 279, 284–85.

120. James M'Dowell Jr., *Speech of James M'Dowell, Jr. (of Rockbridge), in the House of Delegates of Virginia, on the Slave Question: Delivered Saturday, January 21, 1832,* 2nd ed. (Richmond: Thomas W. White, 1832), 19–20.

121. Kenney, *A Refutation of the Principles of Abolition,* 5–6.

122. F. H. Elmore to James Henry Hammond, April 2, 1838, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 4, LC.

123. Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America,* 129–30. A similar report of a cat being used to torture a (white) victim can be found in a letter to the editor of the *Vicksburg (MS) Register;* see Humanity, "Letter to *Vicksburg Register,*" *Vicksburg (MS) Register,* Sept. 13, 1835. Thanks to Josh Rothman for this reference.

124. See [Jonathan Walker], *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth. By the Author of "The Branded Hand" and "Chattelized Humanity"* (Boston: J. Walker and W. R. Bliss, [1845?]), 13. To label the picture, Walker wrote, "This picture represents one mode too infamous to describe further" (12).

125. Cats, James Steintrager argues, stood for cruelty in the eighteenth century. See James Steintrager, *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 37–38.

126. See, e.g., "Essay by 'A Colored Woman,' " [Nov. 1839], in the *Hartford (CT) Charter Oak,* repr. in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* 3:327; for another image depicting a feline being dragged down a slave's back see *Our* Peculiar *Domestic Institutions* in chapter 5 herein.

127. Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America,* 128.

128. David Lee Child, *The Despotism of Freedom; or, The Tyranny and Cruelty of American Republican Slave-Masters, Shown to Be the Worst in the World; in a Speech, Delivered at the First Anniversary of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, 1833* (Boston: Young Men's Anti-Slavery Association for the Diffusion of Truth, 1833), 35–36.

129. Ibid., 24.

130. Child, *Anti-Slavery Catechism,* 9.

131. See N. Southard, ed., *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1838* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, [1838]), 33.

132. Moses Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery; with a Preface by the Rev. T. Price, D.D.* (1838; 1840 ed.), in Sterling Lancaster Bland Jr., *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology,* vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 47–88, 56.

133. Philemon Bliss, Esq., quoted in Weld, *Slavery as It Is,* 103.

134. Cyrus Pitt Grosvenor, *Address Before the Anti-Slavery Society of Salem and the Vicinity, in the South Meeting-House, in Salem* (Salem, MA: W. and S. B. Ives, Observer Press, 1834), 31.

135. Rev. James A. Thome, Speech at New York, May 1834, quoted in Weld, *Slavery as It Is,* 61.

136. American Anti-Slavery Society, circular, to Theodore Dwight Weld, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 126.

137. Samuel E. Cornish, editorial, *New York Colored American,* March 4, 1837; repr. in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* 3:217.

138. Nathaniel West, in *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Convention, Assembled to Organize a State Anti-Slavery Society, at Harrisburg, on the 31st of January and 1st, 2d and 3d of February 1837* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1837), 11.

139. William Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire, in Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1823), 2.

140. William Ellery Channing, *Slavery* (Boston: James Munroe, 1835), 161.

141. Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America,* 130.

142. Channing, *Slavery*, 134, 50.

143. *The Generous Planter and His Carpenter, Ben,* 29.

144. *Proceedings of the N.H. Anti-Slavery Convention, Held in Concord, on the 11th and 12th of November, 1834* (Concord, NH: Eastman, Webster, 1834), 6.

145. *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Convention,* 25.

146. Reuben Legett to William Newbold, Nov. 5, 1825, Meeting for Sufferings Miscellaneous Papers, C3.3, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

147. Clapp, *Slavery,* 51–52.

148. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 216.

149. Theodore Dwight Weld to Gerrit Smith, form letter, Nov. 28, 1838, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 717.

150. J. A. Thome to Theodore Dwight Weld, Nov. 22, 1839, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 814.

151. Theodore Dwight Weld to J. F. Robinson [May 1?, 1836], in *Emancipator,* July 28, 1836, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 296–99. Robert Abzug points to this letter to suggest that it "would be a mistake to place such horror stories at the center of the antislavery argument." In contrast, I suggest that this letter reveals the ambivalence of activists about the centrality of horror stories in their rhetoric. See Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 134–35.

152. Weld, *American Slavery as It Is,* 109.

153. Theodore Dwight Weld to Gerrit Smith, form letter, Nov. 28, 1838, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 717.

154. Serno W. Streeter and Mary W. Streeter to Theodore Dwight Weld, Dec. 26,

1838, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 733.

155. Lydia Maria Child to Theodore Dwight Weld, Dec. 29, 1838, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 735.

156. Benjamin P. Thomas, *Theodore Weld: Crusader for Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1950), 172.

157. Angelina Grimké Weld to Elizabeth Pease, Aug. 14, 1839, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 785.

158. Theodore Dwight Weld to Gerrit Smith, circular letter, Oct. 23, 1839, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 807.

159. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States,* 175.

160. Harper, *Memoir on Slavery,* 32.

161. William Ellery Channing to Angelina Grimké Weld, May 6, 1839, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 761.

162. H. Cowles Atwater, *Incidents of a Southern Tour: or, The South, as Seen with Northern Eyes* (Boston: J. P. Magee, 1857), 59.

163. This distinction helps explain abolitionists' greater concern with the pain of slaves than with the suffering of free workers. As Elizabeth B. Clark notes, critiques of antislavery complacency about the oppression of free labor underestimate antislavery concerns about cruelty in power relationships. See Bender, *The Antislavery Debate;* and Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak,' " 490n.

164. Channing, *Slavery,* 73, 70–71.

165. Lewis Tappan, Journal, Jan. 11, 1818, LC. Tappan, who had recently lost his two-year-old daughter, left a detailed record of the sermon.

166. William Lloyd Garrison to Henry E. Benson, July 14, 1836, in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison,* edited by Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1971–81), 2:142.

167. William Lloyd Garrison to Lewis Tappan, Dec. 17, 1835, in *Letters of Garrison,* 1:580; for Paul's declaration see 2 Cor. 12:10; see also Acts 5:41.

168. See Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age in the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839).

169. Rev. John Rankin, in Weld, *Slavery as It Is,* 60.

170. Weld, *Slavery as It Is,* 27.

171. *Slave's Friend* 2, no. 14 [1837?]: 4.

172. "Essay by 'A Colored Woman,' " in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers,* 3:327.

173. Grosvenor, *Address Before the Anti-Slavery Society of Salem and the Vicinity,* 32n; Angelina Grimké to Theodore Dwight Weld, [Jan.] 21 [1838], in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844,* 523–24.

174. Child, *The Despotism of Freedom,* 30.

175. Garrison to the Editor of the Boston *Courier,* [March 11, 1837], in *Letters of Garrison,* 2:227.

176. Southard, *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1838,* 11.

177. "Constitution of the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark," May 9, 1834; repr. in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:133.

178. Andrew Harris, speech at Broadway Tabernacle, New York, May 7, 1839; repr. in Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 3:295.

179. Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America*, 128.

180. Theodore Dwight Weld to J. F. Robinson, [May 1?, 1836], in *Emancipator*, July 28, 1836, in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822–1844*, 296–97.

CHAPTER FIVE: Suited for Slavery, 1840–1851

1. John Gorham Palfrey, Autobiography, 1866, 190, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.14(35), Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter Houghton).

2. Gorham's father owned fifty-three human beings but arranged for two in his will. See Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, Dec. 29, 1843, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).1, Houghton; see also "Extract from the Last Will of John Palfrey," in John Gorham Palfrey, "Extracts from Letters &c to & from John Gorham Palfrey 1843–1845," 2–3, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.14(33), Houghton.

3. The lots were of equal value but not equal numbers. Adam Giffen, thinking Palfrey intended to send the laborers out of state, selected the lot with the largest number of fertile women, to "secure the blessing to the progeny." John Gorham Palfrey to Adam Giffen, Boston, Dec. 9, 1843, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.1(128).1, Houghton; Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, March 11, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).6, Houghton.

4. Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, Jan. 2, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).2, Houghton.

5. Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, Jan. 2, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).2, Houghton.

6. Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, Feb. 8, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).4, Houghton.

7. Adam Giffen to John Gorham Palfrey, March 11, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(355).6, Houghton.

8. Henry William Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, Jan. 12, [1844], Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(675).35, Houghton.

9. John Gorham Palfrey, Journal, June 17, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.14(13), Houghton; John Gorham Palfrey, Autobiography, 1866, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.14(35), Houghton.

10. John Gorham Palfrey to Joe, Adam Giffen, June 3, 1845, copy, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.a(128).13, Houghton; John Gorham Palfrey to Adam Giffen, Dec. 10, 1844, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704.1(128).10, Houghton.

11. Lydia Maria Child to John Gorham Palfrey, [1836?], Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(186).1, Houghton; Lydia Maria Child to John Gorham Palfrey, April 18, [1844], bMSAm1704(186).2, Houghton.

12. William Taylor Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, Jan. 5, 1848, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(685).13, Houghton.

13. William Taylor Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, June 29, 1865, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(685).21, Houghton.

14. K[azlitt] Arvine, *Our Duty to the Fugitive Slave: A Discourse Delivered on Sunday, Oct. 6 in West Boylston, Ms., and in Worcester, Dec. 15* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1850), 11–12.

15. [Hannah and Mary Townshend], *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Anti-Slavery Fair, 1846), 9.

16. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "An Address Delivered in the Court-House in Concord, Massachusetts, on 1st August, 1844, on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies," (1844); repr. in *Emerson's Antislavery Writings,* edited by Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 10.

17. William Lloyd Garrison to Elizabeth (Pease) Nichol, Aug. 14, 1846, Garrison Family Papers, bMSAM1906(60), Houghton.

18. Frederick Douglass, "Slavery, the Free Church, and British Agitation Against Bondage," Aug. 3, 1846, *Frederick Douglass Papers,* vol. 1, edited by John Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 321.

19. John Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, March 1, 1827, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1706(677).27, Houghton.

20. A. T. Holmes, "Duties of Christian Masters," in H. N. McTyeire, C. F Sturgis, and A. T. Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants: Three Premium Essays* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 143.

21. H. B. Bascom, *Methodism and Slavery: With Other Matters in Controversy Between the North and the South; Being a Review of the Manifesto of the Majority, in Reply to the Protest of the Minority, of the Late General Conference of the Methodist E. Church, in the Case of Bishop Andrew* (Frankfort, KY: Hodges, Todd, and Pruett, 1845), 43, 45.

22. Catherine L. Bragg to Catharine Gould, Jan. 13, 1849, Catherine L. Bragg Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY (hereafter FHS).

23. Joseph Albert Pease to William Lloyd Garrison, July 1840, Garrison Family Papers, bMSAm1902(24), Houghton.

24. John L. Darby to Elisha Batlette, Aug. 19, 1848, John L. Darby Papers, FHS.

25. "The Age of Bliss," *Nassau Monthly* 6, no. 3 (Nov. 1846): 92.

26. "National Individuality," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* Nov. 1851, 77.

27. "True and False Philanthropy," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* March 1845, 185–90; "True Philanthropy," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* March 1854, 166–68; "True Reformation," *Nassau Monthly* 5, no. 8 (May 1846): 253.

28. "True and False Philanthropy," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* March 1845, 187.

29. L. K. T., "Universal Benevolence," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* Sept. 1847, 2.

30. "Social Reform," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* Sept. 1848, 4.

31. John M. Carter to John C. Bullitt, Nov. 17, 1845, Bullitt Family Papers, f. 150, FHS.

32. Richard Allen to Joseph Bewley, Jonathan Pim, and the other Members of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends," printed form letter, copy to Thomas P. Cope, Mar. 29, 1847, Thomas P. Cope Papers, coll. 1013, Box B, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford).

33. Joshua R. Giddings to Wendell Phillips, Jan. 23, 1847, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(596), Houghton.

34. [Augustus Baldwin Longstreet], *A Voice from the South: Comprising Letters from Georgia to Massachusetts and to the Southern States,* 8th ed. (Baltimore: Samuel E. Smith, 1848), 40.

35. George Woodward to James Henry Hammond, March 18, 1847, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 7, Library of Congress (hereafter LC).

36. Thomas Chalmers to [Thomas Smyth], Sept. 25, 1844; repr. in "The Late Dr. Chalmers, and the Lessons of His Life, from Personal Recollections," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1847): 56–88, 73; see also George Shepperson, "Thomas Chalmers, the Free Church of Scotland, and the South," *Journal of Southern History* 17, no. 4 (Nov. 1951): 517–37.

37. Frederick Douglass, "A Few Facts and Personal Observations of Slavery: An Address Delivered in Ayr, Scotland, on 24 March 1846," in *Frederick Douglass Papers,* 1:203.

38. Douglass, "Slavery, the Free Church, and British Agitation Against Bondage," 321.

39. American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions, *Report of the Committee on Anti-Slavery Memorials, September, 1845* (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1845), 12.

40. William Patton, *The American Board and Slaveholding,* rev. ed. (Hartford, CT: William H. Burleigh, 1846), 34, 36–37.

41. My argument for the central importance of pain and cruelty as sectional markers builds on the insights of Mark Smith, who argues that Northerners and Southerners understood each other (in part) in terms of competing soundscapes; Northerners thought of the South in terms of the sounds of screaming slaves. See Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

42. "Hymn 17," in Jairus Lincoln, *Anti-Slavery Melodies: For the Friends of Freedom* (Hingham, MA: Elijah P. Mill, 1843), 28.

43. Levi Coffin to E. D. Coffin, March 11, 1849, American Friends Letters, coll. 851, Box 3, Haverford.

44. James Russell Lowell, "Our Southern Brethren" [Jan. 1, 1849], Lowell-Gay Papers, bMSAm1246(131), Houghton; see also the *Anti-Slavery Standard,* Jan. 18, 1849.

45. James Gillespie Birney to Charles Hammond, Nov. 14, 1835, in *Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831–1857,* edited by Dwight L. Dumond, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), 266.

46. Sarah Furber to Thomas Furber, May 17, 1844, Sarah Furber Letters, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University (hereafter LSU).

47. One edition of the image explicitly included the label "Vicksburg"; for the association see, e.g., Abraham Lincoln, "Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions" [1838], in *The Speeches of Abraham Lincoln, with Biographical Introductions and Prefatory Notes* (New York: Lincoln Centenary Association, 1908), 3–4. Notably, Lincoln also linked the Vicksburg events with the lynching of Francis McIntosh, discussed below. Vicksburg, as the historian Joshua Rothman notes, became a "byword for unjustifiable violence" in antebellum America. For the broader significance of the Vicksburg gambling riots see Joshua D. Rothman, "The Hazards of the Flush Times: Gambling, Mob Violence, and the Anxieties of America's Market Revolution," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (Dec. 2008): 651–77, 651; the "Vicksburg" version of *Our Peculiar* Domestic *Institutions* is also reprinted in Rothman (659).

48. Marcus Wood notes that this image decenters the violence done to slaves in its depiction of southern barbarism. See Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 218–19. Despite this visual decentering, slavery's cruelty is not simply an "incidental ingredient." The discourse of southern barbarism took root in slavery; the slavery debate established the idea that the South was a barbaric culture delighting in all kinds of pain.

49. Jonathan Walker, *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth. By the Author of "The Branded Hand" and "Chattelized Humanity"* (Boston: J. Walker and W. R. Bliss, [1845?]), 14.

50. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*, 19. The almanac relied on an account written by George Dickey (a local pastor) thirteen years after the murder. For a modern history of this crime and the competing reports about the murder see Boynton Merrill Jr., *Jefferson's Nephews: A Frontier Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (1976; Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 248–336, esp. 257–58. Boynton notes that the brothers had a suicide pact, but after Lilburne killed himself, Isham decided not to kill himself (although Boynton notes the possibility that Isham actually killed Lilburne). Although the almanac erroneously reported that Isham Lewis had been sentenced to death before his escape, he escaped before standing trial. Boynton suggests that Isham would have been unlikely to have gone to Natchez; instead, he likely faked his death during the Battle of New Orleans to escape the standing indictment. See Boynton, *Jefferson's Nephews*, 296, 301–2, 318.

51. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*, 23.

52. My thanks to Gail Bederman for pointing this out.

53. *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*, 23.

54. *Slavery: A Treatise, Showing That Slavery Is Neither a Moral, Political, nor Social Evil* (Penfield, GA: Benjamin Brantly, 1844), 24.

55. Elliott attended Harvard during 1807 and 1808. See [William Elliott] to [William Plumer Jr.], undated [April 1847], f. 32, Elliott and Gonzales Family Papers, no. 1009, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC); Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 32–33.

56. S. E. Chalmers to Jane C. Hamilton, March 15, 1844, f. 23, Bullock and Hamilton Family Papers, no. 101, SHC.

57. James Henry Hammond, *Two Letters on Slavery in the United States, Addressed to Thomas Clarkson* (1845); repr. as "Slavery in the Light of Political Science," in E. N. Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott, and Loomis, 1860), 652.

58. "Blow Ye the Trumpet," in Lincoln, *Anti-Slavery Melodies,* 6.

59. James Freeman Clarke, *Slavery in the United States. A Sermon Delivered in Amory Hall, on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1842* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1843), 5.

60. Ibid., 5–6.

61. J. Milton Emerson, Journal, Sept. 29, 1841; Oct. 18, 1841, J. Milton Emerson Journal, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library (hereafter Duke).

62. John Bishop Estlin, *A Brief Notice of American Slavery and the Abolition Movement* (Bristol, VA: H. C. Evans, 1846), 8.

63. "He Is Contented and Happy," *Monthly Offering* (Aug. 1840): 18; *The Soul in Bonds* (Lowell, MA: For the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Fair, [184?]), 4.

64. Lunsford Lane, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C.,* 3rd ed. (1845), in *African American Slave Narratives: An Anthology,* edited by Sterling Lecater Bland Jr., 3 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 1:115.

65. William Lloyd Garrison, preface to Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* edited by Benjamin Quarles (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1960), 12.

66. Clarke, *Slavery in the United States,* 6–8.

67. Uzziah Cicero Burnap, *Bible Servitude: A Sermon, Delivered in the Appleton-St. Church, Lowell, on the Day of Annual Thanksgiving, November 30, 1843* (Lowell: A. E. Newton and A. O. Ordway, 1843), 11–12, 17.

68. See McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 3.

69. C. F. Sturgis, "Melville Letters; or, The Duties of Masters to Their Servants," in McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 60.

70. H. N. McTyeire, "Master and Servant," in McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 21.

71. Maria L. Davis to Ezra Goddard, Feb. 5, 1843, James S. M. Davis Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina (hereafter SCL).

72. "Amor Patriae," *A Comparison of Slavery with Abolitionism, Together with Reflections Deduced from the Premises, Touching the Several Interests of the United States* (New York: For the publisher, 1848), 7.

73. James Shannon, *The Philosophy of Slavery, as Identified with the Philosophy of Human Happiness: An Essay,* 2nd ed. (Frankfort, KY: A. G. Hodges, 1849), 3.

74. William Renwick, "The Advantages & Disadvantages of Slavery as It Exists in the South," William Renwick Papers, SCL. Renwick's instructor encouraged him to begin his next essay earlier.

75. Augustin Verot, *A Tract for the Times: Slavery & Abolitionism, Being the Substance of a Sermon Preached in the Church of St. Augustine, Florida on the 4th Day of January, 1861* ([1861?]), 10. On the controversy see John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: Norton, 2003), 55–56.

76. A. T. Holmes, "Duties of Christian Masters," in McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 143.

77. The literary scholar George Boulukos argues that eighteenth-century depictions of enslaved blacks as grateful for amelioration played a crucial role in articulating and strengthening ideas of racial difference. See George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6, 14–15. Although Boulukos does not analyze this explicitly, depictions of enslaved blacks as grateful for slaveholders' humaneness rested on assumptions that blacks had simpler and fewer needs than whites.

78. William Paley, *Natural Theology: Or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity. Collected from the Appearances of Nature,* 12th ed. ([1809]; repr., Lincoln-Rembrandt, n.d.), esp. 291, 294, 345.

79. Louisa McCord, "Diversity of the Races," in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays,* edited by Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 173.

80. For Americans' increasing emphasis in the 1840s and 1850s on peculiarities rather than universalism see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (1971; repr., Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 97.

81. H. N., "It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone," *Nassau Monthly* 5, no. 7 (April 1846): 224.

82. See Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind,* 2, 73–74; and Bruce Dain, *The Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 198.

83. Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, *The Types of Mankind: Or, Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon Their Natural, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1854), 411–65. Nott drew heavily on Samuel Morton's measurements of skulls in *Crania Americana* (1839) and *Crania Ægyptiaca* (1844). For oxygen capacity see Samuel A. Cartwright, "Slavery in the Light of Ethnology," in Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments,* 695.

84. See O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 215–52; for the new tone see 238.

85. Nott and Gliddon, *The Types of Mankind,* 49. Nott and Gliddon's book, as Michael O'Brien notes, went through ten editions before 1871. See O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 242.

86. See Nott and Gliddon, *The Types of Mankind,* 372–73, 398–99, 408. Polygenesis, as historians such as Michael O'Brien, Colin Kidd, and George Fredrickson usefully caution, had an ambivalent role in proslavery. Although some defenders of

slavery drew on polygenesis—and some theorists welcomed such uses—issues of biblical interpretation and religious orthodoxy often made this argument unappealing to proslavery intellectuals. Proslavery writers often preferred to look elsewhere—such as the biblical "Curse of Ham"—rather than discarding the Bible for racial science. Lester D. Stephens analyzes John Bachman, a Charleston slaveholder and defender of slavery, who nevertheless attacked polygenesis and theories of hybridity on scientific grounds; many other southern scientists more enthusiastically embraced the idea of separate species. See O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 249; Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127–28, 137; Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind,* 75–77; and Lester D. Stephens, *Science, Race, and Religion in the American South: John Bachman and the Charleston Circle of Naturalists, 1815–1895* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 165–217.

87. George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: A. Morris, 1854), 95.

88. For a detailed analysis of the variety of proslavery arguments attached to the curse see Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

89. The label "Curse of Ham" rather than the more accurate "Curse of Canaan" reinforced this racialized interpretation, since Ham was associated with blackness. See David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 168, 177; and David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64–69, 187.

90. Samuel A. Cartwright, *Essays, Being Inductions Drawn from the Baconian Philosophy Proving the Truth of the Bible and the Justice and Benevolence of the Decree Dooming Canaan to Be Servant of Servants . . .* (Vidalia, LA: n.p., 1843), 11–14.

91. Solon Robinson, "Negro Slavery at the South," *De Bow's Review* 7, no. 3 (Sept. 1849): 206–25, 214.

92. Cartwright, *Essays,* 11–12.

93. Ibid., 13.

94. See Charles E. Rosenberg, *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought,* rev. and exp. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 10–11.

95. Robinson, "Negro Slavery at the South," 219.

96. Cartwright, *Essays,* 19, 21.

97. Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 155–56.

98. John L. Darby to Elisha Batlette, Aug. 19, 1848, John L. Darby Papers, FHS.

99. Robinson, "Negro Slavery at the South," 214.

100. Ibid., 216.

101. Hammond, "Slavery in the Light of Political Science," 656; James Henry Hammond to [Lewis Tappan], draft, Aug. 1, 1845, Hammond Papers, Reel 6, LC.

102. Amos Kendall to Lewis Tappan, Jan. 31, 1843, Lewis Tappan Papers, Reel 6, LC.

103. McCord, "Diversity of the Races," 166.

104. "It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone," *Nassau Monthly* 5, no. 7 (April 1846): 224.

105. James Henry Hammond to [Lewis Tappan], draft, Aug. 1, 1845, Hammond Papers, Reel 6, LC.

106. See Daniel Wickberg, "The Sympathetic Self in American Culture: 1750–1920," in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past,* edited by Wilfred M. McClay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 157.

107. James Kirke Paulding, *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1836), 179.

108. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering,* 155–56.

109. James Henley Thornwell, draft, "Slavery," n.d., f. 64, James Henley Thornwell Papers, SCL.

110. James Henry Hammond to [Lewis Tappan], draft, Aug. 1, 1845, Hammond Papers, Reel 6, LC.

111. William T. Hamilton, *The Duties of Masters and Slaves Respectively; or, Domestic Servitude as Sanctioned by the Bible: A Discourse Delivered in the Government-Street Church, Mobile, Al.* (Mobile, AL: F. H. Brooks, 1845), 16.

112. George F. Simmons, *Two Sermons on the Kind Treatment and on the Emancipation of Slaves. Preached at Mobile, on Sunday the 10th, and Sunday the 17th of May, 1840* (Boston: William Crosby, 1840), v, 14–15.

113. Ibid., 20.

114. "Charge of Abducting Slaves," *Pennsylvania Freeman,* n.d.; repr. in the *Rochester (NY) North Star,* Nov. 24, 1848, Accessible Archives Search and Information Server, www.accessible.com, item no. 13197 (accessed April 2, 2002).

115. James Russell Lowell, "The Attitude of the Religious Press" [Oct. 1848], Lowell-Gay Papers, bMSAm1246(120), Houghton.

116. Moses Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery; with a Preface by the Rev. T. Price, D.D.* (1838; 1840 ed.), in Bland, *African American Slave Narratives,* 1:51, 56.

117. Alvan Stewart, *A Legal Argument Before the Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey, at the May Term, 1845, at Trenton, for the Deliverance of 4,000 Persons from Bondage* (New York: Finch and Weed, 1845), 10.

118. Henry "Box" Brown, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown* (1849), in Bland, *African American Slave Narratives,* 2:469.

119. Walker, *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth,* 17.

120. Lewis Clarke and Milton Clarke, *Narratives of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke, Sons of a Soldier of the Revolution, During a Captivity of More Than Twenty Years Among the Slaveholders of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of America. Dictated by Themselves* (1846 ed.), in Bland, *African American Slave Narratives,* 1:156, 175–76.

121. Frederick Douglass, "I Have Come to Tell You Something About Slavery," *Pennsylvania Freeman,* Oct. 20, 1841, in *Frederick Douglass Papers,* 1:3.

122. Frederick Douglass, "Slavery and America's Bastard Republicanism," *Reporter* (Limerick, Ireland), Nov. 11, 1845, in *Frederick Douglass Papers,* 1:85–86.

123. See Sarah N. Roth, " 'How a Slave Was Made a Man': Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives," *Slavery and Abolition* 28, no. 2 (Aug. 2007): 255–75, 260–61.

124. William H. Johnson, *Narrative of the Fugitive Slave, William H. Johnson, of Maryland. Dictated by Himself* (Worcester, MA: For William H. Johnson, 1847), 7–9, 15.

125. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* 27–30.

126. Johnson, *Narrative of the Fugitive Slave, William H. Johnson, of Maryland,* 6–7.

127. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* 89, 91.

128. Ibid., 91.

129. Ibid., 27–30, 105.

130. Ibid., 133.

131. Ibid., 69.

132. Brown, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown,* 452–53.

133. Frederick Douglass, "American Prejudice and Southern Religion," *Hingham (MA) Patriot,* Nov. 20, 1841, in *Frederick Douglass Papers,* 1:12. For another example see Frederick Douglass, "The Southern Style of Preaching to Slaves," *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (1842), in *Frederick Douglass Papers,* 1:18–19.

134. J. Milton Emerson, Journal, Dec. 12, 1841, J. Milton Emerson Journal, Duke.

135. James Russell Lowell, "Putting the Cart Before the Horse" [October 1849], Lowell-Gay Papers, bMSAm1246(146), Houghton; see also the *Anti-Slavery Standard,* Oct. 4, 1849.

136. Clarke, *Slavery in the United States,* 8–9.

137. Saidiya V. Hartman argues that spectacles of contentment were central to the domination of slavery; they encouraged the notion that human beings who could be content in such circumstances were, in fact, suited for it. See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35, 42.

138. James Henry Hammond, "An Oration Delivered in the Presbyterian Church on the Fourth of July 1829," Hammond Papers, Reel 1, LC.

139. "Memorial of the Religious Society of Friends in Pennsylvania New Jersey Delaware &c to the Senate & House of Representatives of the United States," April 1844, MS-Misc, C.41, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, coll. 1250 (hereafter PYM), Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library. The term *Orthodox* is an official designation, distinguishing them from "Hicksite" Quakers.

140. MS-Philadelphia to MS-London, March 21, 1845, MS-Misc, C4.1, PYM.

141. *Rules of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, Held in Baltimore* (Baltimore: William Wooddy, 1844), 61.

142. New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (hereafter NEYM), "An Appeal to the Professors of Christianity in the Southern States and

Elsewhere on the Subject of Slavery, by the Representatives of the Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England," manuscript draft, Feb. 2, 1842, 4–5, NEYM-Meeting for Sufferings (hereafter MS), Box 159, f. 12, NEYM Papers, housed at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.

143. NEYM, "An Appeal to the Professors," 25, 29.

144. John England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth on the Subject of Domestic Slavery* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1844), 21. The encyclical clearly condemned the slave trade strongly; Catholics were divided on whether its condemnations extended to slavery. For Catholics and slavery see John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: Norton, 2003), 43–67. Strikingly, the encyclical was promulgated a year after Jesuits in Maryland sold 272 enslaved laborers. For Jesuit slaveholding in Maryland see Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Murphy, however, mentions the encyclical only in passing (41).

145. [Longstreet], *A Voice from the South*, 9.

146. Jefferson Davis, *Speech of Mr. Davis, of Mississippi, on the Subject of Slavery in the Territories. Delivered in the Senate of the United States, February 13 & 14, 1850* [Washington, DC: Towers, 1850], 16.

147. John L. Carey, *Slavery in Maryland Briefly Considered* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1845), 15.

148. *Slavery: A Treatise*, 38.

149. Ibid.

150. Davis, *Speech of Mr. Davis*, 16.

151. Hammond, "Slavery in the Light of Political Science," 632.

CHAPTER SIX: The Contradictions of Benevolence, 1852–1861

1. Maunsel White, Memoranda Book, May 6, 1861, Maunsel White Papers, no. 2234, f. 7, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC).

2. Jane Tompkins argues that the sentimental novel's power came from tapping into a storehouse of cultural assumptions rather than escaping them. See Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xvi.

3. Lydia Maria Child to Francis George Shaw, June 5, [1852], Shaw Papers, bMSAm1417(35), Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter Houghton).

4. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1964), 53.

5. Ibid., 153.

6. Ibid., 183; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin": Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story Is Founded, Together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work* (1854; facs. ed., New York: Arno, 1968), 257.

7. Stowe, *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin,* 518.

8. Karen Sánchez-Eppler notes the oppressive possibilities of such imagery, which offered Tom freedom through the obliteration of his body. This point is fair, and from a modern perspective Stowe's choice disempowered Uncle Tom. Yet Stowe also tapped into a tradition of identifying patient suffering as spiritual power. What is most striking is that despite the strong association of patient suffering, martyrdom, and spiritual power, enslaved African Americans were rarely depicted as martyrs or Christ-figures in abolitionist rhetoric. Marianne Noble notes that Tom transcends not his body but his definition as property. See Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 46–47; and Marianne Noble, "The Ecstasies of Sentimental Wounding in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,*" *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10, no. 2 (1997): 295–320, esp. 301–2.

9. "Home and the Slave," *Frederick Douglass Paper,* Jan. 21, 1853, in Accessible Archives Search and Information Server, www.accessible.com, accession no. 45701 (accessed April 2, 2002).

10. [Charles Blackford] to Mary Blackford, May 4, 1853, Blackford Family Papers, no. 1912, f. 60, SHC; Charles M. Blackford to Mary Blackford, Jan. 4, 1853; Jan. 18, 1853, Blackford Family Papers, no. 1912, f. 59, SHC.

11. For proslavery literary responses to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* see Sarah N. Roth, "Rebels and Martyrs: The Debate over Slavery in American Popular Culture, 1822–1865" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2002), 148–80.

12. See Joseph D. Heacock to Sarah Bunting, March 8, 1855, Sarah W. Bunting Papers, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library (hereafter Duke).

13. Edward Thomas Heriot to unnamed correspondent, April 20, 1853, Edward Thomas Heriot Papers, Duke.

14. W. J. A. Fuller to Z. B. Oakes, Nov. 2, 1859, copy, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(574), Houghton; David Christy, "Cotton Is King: Or, Slavery in the Light of Political Economy," in *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments,* edited by E. N. Elliott (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott, and Loomis, 1860), 170.

15. See "British and American Slavery," *Southern Quarterly Review* 8, no 16 (Oct. 1853): 369–411, esp. 373–74.

16. Stowe, *The Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"* 1; Lydia Maria Child, "How a Kentucky Girl Emancipated Her Slaves," *The Independent,* March 27, 1862, 6–7; available on Emory Women Writers Resource Project, http://chaucer.library.emory.edu/wwrp (accessed April 19, 2005).

17. William Jay, quoted in William Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features Shown by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts* (1853; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 11.

18. As Markman Ellis suggests (for the eighteenth century), such arguments testify to the political power of novels. See Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 190–221.

19. "The Melancholist," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* May 1852, 254.

20. Sympathy, as Daniel Wickberg suggests, was not exclusively sentimental, nor was it always emotional rather than rational. See Daniel Wickberg, "The Sympathetic Self in American Culture: 1750–1920," in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past,* edited by Wilfred M. McClay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 134, 152–53.

21. See A. Woodward, *A Review of "Uncle Tom's Cabin": Or, An Essay on Slavery* (Cincinnati: Applegate, 1853), 66–67.

22. A Southern Lady, "British Philanthropy and American Slavery," *De Bow's Review* 14, no. 3 (March 1853): 258–80, 259.

23. [Edward J. Pringle], *Slavery in the Southern States* (Cambridge, MA: J. Bartlett, 1852), 8.

24. J. T. Wiswall, "Delusions of Fanaticism," *De Bow's Review* 29, no. 1 (July 1860): 42–61, 45.

25. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* 136; Elizabeth Barnes, "The Epistemology of the 'Real': A Response to Marianne Noble," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10, no 2 (1997): 321–26, 321.

26. [Samuel A. McElhinney], "Fictitious Literature," *Nassau Literary Magazine,* Oct. 1852, 51–52, 54.

27. James Henley Thornwell, "Novels," draft, n.d., James Henley Thornwell Papers, Legal, f. 7, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina (hereafter SCL).

28. Unknown student, Lecture Notes, "Elements of Moral Philosophy," 1853, 5, James Henley Thornwell Papers, SCL.

29. [Pringle], *Slavery in the Southern States,* 26.

30. Charles M. Blackford to Mary Blackford, Jan. 18, 1853, Blackford Family Papers, no. 1912, f. 59, SHC.

31. [Charles M. Blackford] to Mary Blackford, May 4, 1853, Blackford Family Papers, no. 1912, f. 60, SHC.

32. William Roane Aylett, "Advantage of Slavery to the South," n.d. [c. 1851–65], Aylett Family Papers, sec. 27, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

33. Richard Eppes, Diary, Dec. 9, 1855, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 42, VHS.

34. George Fitzhugh, appendix, *Sociology for the South; or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854; repr., New York: Burt Franklin, [1965?]), 247.

35. [Ephraim Peabody], *Slavery in the United States: Its Evils, Alleviations, and Remedies* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 7.

36. Lyman Johnson, *Sin of Slavery: A Discourse, First Preached in the N.S. Presbyterian Church, Rockford, Ill., July 15, 1860* (New York: John P. Prall, 1860), 12.

37. Michael D. Pierson usefully argues that rhetoric shifted dramatically in the 1850s from focusing on treatment to attacking patriarchal structures themselves. See Michael D. Pierson, " 'Slavery Cannot Be Covered Up with Broadcloth or a Bandana': The Evolution of White Abolitionist Attacks on the 'Patriarchal Institution,' " *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (fall 2005): 383–415, esp. 383, 386, 397. Yet such

rhetoric had antecedents. Although qualms about focusing on treatment grew in the 1850s, these qualms echoed older doubts about focusing on physical cruelty (see chaps. 4 and 5 herein), and they did not displace cruelty from the center of antislavery rhetoric.

38. Charles Grandison Parsons, *Inside View of Slavery; or, A Tour Among the Planters* (1855; repr., Detroit: Negro History Press, 1970), 54, 150.

39. Martha Griffith to John Gorham Palfrey, Feb. 15, [1857], Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(134).1, Houghton.

40. Johnson, *Sin of Slavery,* 12.

41. Parsons, *Inside View of Slavery,* 38–39, 156–62, 208.

42. Mattie Griffith [also Martha Griffith Browne], *Autobiography of a Female Slave* (1857; repr., Detroit: Negro History Press, 1969). Some historians have mistaken this book for an actual slave narrative, but Griffith simply followed an antislavery tradition of sympathetically imagining herself as a slave. Cf. William E. Wiethoff, *The Insolent Slave* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 69, 107.

43. Martha Griffith to John Gorham Palfrey, Feb. 15, [1857], Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(134).1, Houghton.

44. Lydia Maria Child to John Gorham Palfrey, Jan. 28, 1857, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(186).3, Houghton.

45. Griffith, *Autobiography of a Female Slave,* 25.

46. Ibid., 48–49.

47. Ibid., 304.

48. Elizabeth B. Clark highlights the significance of this development for abolitionist cruelty narratives. See Elizabeth B. Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sept. 1995): 463–93, 480; see also David S. Reynolds, "From Doctrine to Narrative: The Rise of Pulpit Storytelling in America," *American Quarterly* 32 (winter 1980): 479–98.

49. Charles Hodge, "The Bible Argument on Slavery," in Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments,* 837–73, esp. 850–52.

50. Mark Noll and Robert Bruce Mullin argue that most Protestants found themselves caught between denying that slavery was sinful and challenging widely accepted exegetical models. Some, like Hodge, distinguished between slavery in the abstract and slavery as practiced. See Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 386–418; and Robert Bruce Mullin, "Biblical Critics and the Battle over Slavery," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61 (summer 1983): 210–36. Both, however, examine the question from the perspective of scholarly exegesis and may thus underestimate the appeal of this approach; on the popular level, many antislavery people qualified or challenged biblical support for slavery by differentiating between biblical and southern slavery.

51. James Redpath, *The Roving Editor, or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States,* edited by John R. McKivigan (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 165.

52. Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice,* 18–19.

53. "The Scourged Back," *New York Independent,* May 28, 1863.

54. "The Dumb Witness," *Liberator,* June 13, 1863.

55. "The Scourged Back," *New York Independent,* May 28, 1863.

56. "The Dumb Witness," *Liberator,* June 13, 1863; "The Scourged Back," *New York Independent,* May 28, 1863.

57. See Kathleen Collins, "The Scourged Back," *History of Photography* 9, no. 1 (Jan.-March 1985): 43–45. A copy of the Philadelphia version is in the Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 9, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library (hereafter Haverford).

58. "A Typical Negro," *Harper's Weekly,* July 4, 1863, 429.

59. See *The Scourged Back,* Allinson Family Papers, coll. 968, Box 9, Haverford; cf. "A Typical Negro," *Harper's Weekly,* July 4, 1863, 429.

60. "The Scarred Back," *New York Independent,* Aug. 13, 1863.

61. The photos differed in the minor detail of the arrangement of fingers on the hip.

62. Thanks to Holly Reed of the National Archives for her help. National Archives Photo 165-JT-230.

63. Peter's account differed in crucial details from Gordon's story in *Harper's,* but it does fit neatly with other evidence. Peter was owned by Captain John Lyons, a wealthy cotton planter in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, who, according to the 1860 census, owned nearly forty slaves. It is possible that Gordon, the name given in *Harper's,* was Peter's surname; St. Landry's Parish included two slaveholding families of Gordons from whom he could have been purchased; slaveholders sometimes foisted their own surnames on their slaves. Early 1863 offered slaves in St. Landry a dangerous opportunity, and Peter joined countless blacks who took advantage of wartime disorder to seek freedom behind Union lines. According to Peter's story, printed on the caption, he escaped around March 23 from his plantation, which was located on the bank of the Atchafalaya River. From there he could travel east and reach the protection of the Union army within several days, since it had captured Baton Rouge and had begun operations just east of the Atchafalaya River. By April 2 he had arrived and been photographed. By the end of the month, he could have had the satisfaction of seeing the Union army attack eastern St. Landry Parish; perhaps, if *Harper's* recorded this detail correctly, he even assisted the army as a guide. See John Lyons, p. 249 [handwritten], line 12, family 1647, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, 1860 Federal Census, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, Roll 424; and John Lyons, p. 111 [handwritten], line 26, St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, 1860 Federal Census Slave Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, Roll 431. The 1860 slave schedules of the federal census include S. J. C. Gordon as owner of forty slaves and M. M. Gordon as owner of thirty-six slaves (St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, National Archives Microfilm Publication M653, Roll 431); see also, S. E. Gordon, p. 5, line 32, Corporation Washington, St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. The *Liberator* specifically mentioned the "First Louisiana" regiment; both

the First Regiment, Louisiana Cavalry and First Regiment, Louisiana Infantry were engaged in operations against Port Hudson from March 7 through March 27. See "The Dumb Witness," *Liberator,* June 13, 1863.

64. "The Scourged Back," *New York Independent,* May 28, 1863.

65. See George Lansing Taylor, "The Scourged Back," *New York Independent,* Aug. 6, 1863.

66. As Jennifer Putzi notes, the dominance of the image of the whipped back in the triptych reinforced Gordon's identity as a slave rather than as a soldier; scars established one's status as a slave. See Jennifer Putzi, " 'The Skin of an American Slave': African American Manhood and the Marked Body in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature," *Studies in American Fiction* 30, no. 2 (autumn 2002): 181–206, esp. 182.

67. See "A Typical Negro," 429.

68. This photograph, as Louis P. Masur notes, is too often taken at face value; it is widely printed in textbooks as evidence of the brutality of slavery. See Louis P. Masur, " 'Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity': The Use of Images in American History Textbooks," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 4 (March 1998): 1417–19. The photograph does show the brutality of slavery, but the photo must be situated within antislavery polemical conventions rather than treated as a freestanding fact.

69. Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave,* 2nd ed. (1854; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 1970), 189, 256.

70. Redpath, *The Roving Editor, or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States,* 18; H. Cowles Atwater, *Incidents of a Southern Tour: Or, The South, as Seen with Northern Eyes* (Boston: J. P. Magee, 1857), 27, 29.

71. For the significance of these nearly white children in photographs see Mary Niall Mitchell, " 'Rosebloom and Pure White,' or So It Seemed," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2002): 369–410.

72. "The White Slaves," *New York Independent,* Feb. 4, 1864.

73. See Pattie Waller (Aylett) Cabell to William Roane Aylett, Jan. 31, 1858; March 20, 1859, Aylett Family Papers, sec. 24, f. 28, VHS.

74. Octavius Theodore Porcher, Diary, April 4, 1852, Octavius Theodore Porcher Papers, SCL.

75. H. N. McTyeire, C. F Sturgis, and A. T. Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants: Three Premium Essays* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1851).

76. William A. Smith, *Lectures on the Philosophy and Practice of Slavery, as Exhibited in the Institution of Domestic Slavery in the United States: With the Duties of Masters to Slaves,* edited by Thomas O. Summers (Nashville: Stevenson and Evans, 1856), ix, 276–328.

77. *Plantation and Farm Instruction, Regulation, Record, Inventory and Account Book* ([Richmond, VA?: J. W. Randolph?, 1852?]), 4–5, Philip St. George Cocke formbook, vol. 1 (1854), VHS; *Plantation and Farm Instruction, Regulation, Record, Inventory and Account Book. For the Use of the Manager on the —— Estate of ——. By a Southern Planter* (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph, 1852), in Eppes Family Papers, sec. 43, VHS. See

also *Plantation and Farm Instruction, Regulation, Record Inventory and Account Book. For the Use of the Manager on the Estate of Philip St. George Cocke, And for the Better Ordering and Management of Plantation and Farm Business in Many Particulars,* 2nd ed. (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph, 1861), 4–5, Philip St. George Cocke Papers, VHS.

78. *Plantation and Farm Instruction, Regulation, Record, Inventory and Account Book* ([Richmond, VA?: J. W. Randolph?, 1852?]), 6–10, Philip St. George Cocke formbook, vol. 1 (1854), VHS.

79. See, e.g., James Henry Hammond, Plantation Book, 1857–58, 20–47, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 18, Library of Congress (hereafter LC); William Ethelbert Ervin, plantation Diary, 1847; William Ethelbert Ervin Papers, no. 247, f. 2, SHC; "Rules Concerning Negro Slaves," Rutherfoord Family Papers, sec. 17, VHS.

80. A. T. Holmes, "Duties of Christian Masters," in McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 143.

81. Ibid., 137.

82. Edward Josiah Stearns, *Notes on "Uncle Tom's Cabin": Being a Logical Answer to Its Allegations and Inferences Against Slavery as an Institution* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1853), 48.

83. S. A. Cartwright, "Slavery in the Light of Ethnology," in Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments,* 691–728, 719.

84. For an exception treating slavery as a matter of the greater good, as opposed to enslaved blacks' individual goods, see Untitled Paper, [subsection 16], [c. 1854], in Slavery Justification Essays 2597-z, SHC. This is a collection of essay fragments, possibly student lecture notes or notes in preparation for a speech.

85. Cartwright, "Slavery in the Light of Ethnology," 719; Robert Henderson Allen, diary, Aug. 8, 1863, Robert Henderson Allen Papers, Diary 1, VHS.

86. J. W. Tedbetter to F. M. Carter, July 5, 1850, Farish Carter Papers, no. 2230, f. 39, SHC.

87. *Plantation and Farm Instruction,* 4–5, Philip St. George Cocke formbook, vol. 1, VHS.

88. C. F. Sturgis, "Melville Letters; or, The Duties of Masters to Their Servants," in McTyeire, Sturgis, and Holmes, *Duties of Masters to Servants,* 90.

89. Ibid.

90. James Henry Hammond, Journal, Sept. 5, [1841], in *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder,* edited by Carol Bleser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 73.

91. See Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

92. See "Code of Laws for Island Plantation," n.d., Eppes Family Papers, sec. 69, VHS.

93. Richard Eppes, Diary, Jan. 2, 1853, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 41, VHS.

94. Ibid., Nov. 28, 1859, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 46, VHS.

95. Robert Breckinridge to [Virginia Breckinridge], July 29, 1857, Grigsby Family Papers, f. 86, FHS.

96. Elizabeth Harris (Mason) Heath to Lewis E. Mason, Oct. 17, 1858, Mason Family Papers (C), sec. 52, f. 14, VHS; Susan Alexander to Susan Grigsby, Nov. 1, 1858, Grigsby Family Papers, f. 162, Filson Historical Society (hereafter FHS).

97. A. H. Pemberton to James Henry Hammond, Dec. 21, 1846, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 7, LC.

98. Frances Parke to Margaret Craig, Nov. 3, 1850, Craig and Hanna Family Papers, SCL.

99. A. H. Pemberton to James Henry Hammond, Dec. 21, 1846, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 7, LC.

100. Baker frequently tried to live up to his ideal of obeying nature's laws to reduce his own suffering, particularly regarding diet, but seems to have been unable to do so, if one judges by the frequency of his resolutions. Baker Diary, March 27, 1864, [126], Everard Green Baker Diaries, no. 41, f. 3, v. 4, SHC.

101. Charles E. Rosenberg, *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought*, rev. and exp. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 10–11.

102. Richard Eppes, Diary, Oct. 15, 1851, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 39, VHS.

103. "Code of Laws for Island Plantation," n.d., Eppes Family Papers, sec. 69, VHS.

104. Octavius Theodore Porcher, Journal, Feb. 15, 1852; April 4, 1852; June 15, 1852, Octavius Theodore Porcher Papers, SCL.

105. John Young Mason to Lewis E. Mason, Feb. 17, 1856, Mason Family Papers (C), sec. 52, f. 21, VHS.

106. Jesse Talbot Bernard to Frances Bernard, June 25, [1853?], Bernard Family Papers, sec. 4, f. 1, VHS.

107. Joseph D. Heacock to Sarah Bunting, March 8, 1855, Sarah W. Bunting Papers, Duke.

108. E. Coles to John Rutherfoord, Sept. 20, 1853, John Coles Rutherfoord Papers, Duke.

109. Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, *A Plantation Mistress on the Eve of the Civil War: The Diary of Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard, 1860–1861,* edited by John Hammond Moore (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 86, 90. These entries were dated February 3 and 13, 1861.

110. Ibid., 81. This entry was dated January 26, 1861.

111. Caleb W. Logan to Agatha Logan, Feb. 14, 1858, Bullitt Family Papers, f. 519, FHS.

112. Frances Ewing to Frances Barbour, July 7, 1862, Barbour Family Papers, sec. 6, f. 5, VHS.

113. Kate Foster, Diary, July 25, 1963, Kate Foster Diary, Duke.

114. Priscilla Munnikhuysen Bond diary, Aug. 26, 1861, transcript, 60–61, Priscilla Munnikhuysen Bond Diary, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries (hereafter LSU). See also Priscilla Munnikhuysen Bond Diary in Anne Firor Scott and William H. Chafe, eds., *Southern Women and Their Families in the 19th Century: Papers and Diaries,* ser. E, Reel 33.

115. Narcissa Melissa Lawton Diary, March 17, 1863, transcript, Alice Augusta Collar Tonge Papers, SCL.

116. See, e.g., Augustin Verot, *A Tract for the Times: Slavery & Abolitionism, Being the Substance of a Sermon Preached in the Church of St. Augustine, Florida on the 4th Day of January, 1861, Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer* [St. Augustine, FL?: n.p., 1861?]. Michael Gannon argues that Verot galvanized a movement for legal reforms of slavery during the Civil War. See Michael Gannon, *Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, [1964]), 52n43. Historians have paid little attention to this movement. Bell Irvin Wiley argued that reformism emerged during the war because Southerners no longer feared abolitionism; he does not take into account long-standing antebellum discussions. See Bell Irvin Wiley, "The Movement to Humanize the Institution of Slavery During the Confederacy," *Emory University Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (Dec. 1949): 207–20.

117. "Wealth and Poverty—Luxury and Economy," *De Bow's Review* 30, no. 4 (April 1861): 399–407, 403.

118. R. H. Rivers, *Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1859), 380.

119. Eugene Genovese stresses that proslavery polemicists, despite their critique of free labor, rejected and feared working-class radicalism. Genovese argues that they saw slavery as a way to prevent progress from turning against itself. See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820–1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), esp. 18, 34–35.

120. Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 877–78, 881.

121. Examples of Southerners who insisted that human beings did not always act on self-interest include Thomas Cooper and George Tucker. See O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 902, 912.

122. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols., edited by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (1976; facs. repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), 26–27.

123. Amy Dru Stanley argues for the importance of contract theory to abolitionists; they idealized the contract as a metaphor for freedom and, in the postbellum era, as a model for understanding and containing social relations. See Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–59, esp. 1–2, 19. Yet it is problematic to assume that their proslavery opponents viewed the distinction between slavery and freedom as the absence or presence of a contract. Some did, but others described slavery as a kind of contract between enslaved blacks and their owners.

124. [James Shannon], *An Address Delivered Before the Pro-Slavery Convention of the State of Missouri, Held in Lexington, July 13, 1855* (St. Louis, MO: Republican Book and Job Office, 1855), 16–17; Thornton Stringfellow, "Statistical View of Slavery," in Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments*, 522–46, 534.

125. Joseph D. Heacock to Sarah Bunting, March 8, 1855, Sarah W. Bunting Papers, Duke.

126. For the importance of disinterested benevolence to early antislavery see Kenneth P. Minkema and Harry S. Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition and the Antislavery Debate, 1740–1865," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (2005): 47–74.

127. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1896), 36; Stowe, *The Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"* 15.

128. Rivers, *Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 133. For biblical duties to enemies see Matt. 5:43–44, Luke 6:27, and Luke 6:35.

129. Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South,* 46; Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters,* edited by C. Vann Woodward (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1960), 36.

130. Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* 36.

131. O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order,* 974.

132. Edward Thomas Heriot to unnamed relative, April 20, 1853, Edward Thomas Heriot Papers, Duke.

133. [John H. Hopkins], *Bible View of Slavery* (n.p., [Jan. 30, 1861]), 9.

134. Robert Bruce Mullin, "John Henry Hopkins," American National Biography Online (Oxford University Press, 2000–2010), www.anb.org/articles/08/08–00705.html (accessed April 5, 2005).

135. [Pringle], *Slavery in the Southern States,* 33–35.

136. Stearns, *Notes on "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"* 41–42.

137. Rivers, *Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 352.

138. Robert Augustus Toombs, *A Lecture in the Tremont Temple, Boston, Massachusetts, on the 24th [of] January, 1856* (n.p., [1856?]), 13, 14.

139. Everard Green Baker Diary, March 15, 1849, [v. 3, p. 8], in Everard Green Baker Diaries, no. 41, SHC.

140. See, e.g., William Ethelbert Ervin, "Rules to Be Observed on My Place After the First of January 1847," Plantation Diary, p. 39, William Ethelbert Ervin Diaries, no. 247, vol. 2, SHC; Richard Eppes, Diary, March 6, 1859, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 45, VHS.

141. Richard Eppes, Diary, Dec. 4, 1859, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 46, VHS.

142. Edward D. Hammer to Lewis Mason, Oct. 23, 1858, Mason Family Papers (C), sec. 52, f. 14, VHS.

143. John Young Mason to Lewis E. Mason, May 27, 1857, Mason Family Papers (C), sec. 52, f. 21, VHS.

144. Patrick Henry Aylett to William Roane Aylett, Jan. 5, 1861, Aylett Family Papers, sec. 24, f. 6, VHS.

145. Maria Jane M'Intosh, *Letter on the Address of the Women of England to Their Sisters in America* (New York: T. J. Crowen, 1853), 27–28.

146. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 28.

147. For southern views of traders see Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

148. See Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 5, 141, 178. Tadman treats slaves purchased by migrating whites before migrating as part of the trade, not the 40 percent of migration.

149. See Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 157.

150. Ibid., 40–62; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves,* 11.

151. I am not suggesting that most slaveholders went to great efforts to avoid splitting up families. Historians rightly stress that slaveholders—and not just traders—split up families when they decided whom to sell. See Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves,* 184. In emphasizing these broader forces, I am not attempting to shift blame from slaveholders but to show how slaveholders could simultaneously see themselves as benevolent, even as they recognized slaves' vulnerability to painful separations. Though disingenuous, slaveholders' tendency to blame family separations on either necessity or the inhumanity of others helps to explain their public silence. See also Deyle, *Carry Me Back,* 220–43.

152. *Plantation and Farm Instruction, Regulation, Record, Inventory and Account Book* ([Richmond, VA?: J. W. Randolph?, 1852?]), 4–5, Philip St. George Cocke formbook, vol. 1 (1854), VHS. Eppes owned the same book; see Richard Eppes, Diary, Eppes Family Papers, sec. 43, VHS.

153. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce,* 191–92, 201.

154. It is not clear whether she was also separated from a husband. She sent love to "bailum" and asks whether he had married. See Vilot Lester to Patsey Patterson, Aug. 29, 1857, Joseph Allred Papers, Duke.

155. Hector Harris to William Haxall, April 3, 1861; Jan. 1, 1863; Jan. 20, 1863; Jan. 30, 1863; Feb. 16, 1863, Haxall Family Papers, sec. 1, VHS.

156. Roscoe Briggs Heath to Lewis Mason, Jan. 14, [1856; misdated as 1855], Mason Family Papers (C), sec. 52, f. 15, VHS.

157. Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves,* 178. Migrations separated immediate families, but Tadman's estimates assume that migration was not sex or age selective; selective migrations counted in the trade.

158. Charles Beakeley to William Roane Aylett, Sept. 9, 1859, Aylett Family Papers, sec. 24, f. 9, VHS.

159. Pattie Waller Aylett to William Roane Aylett, Jan. 31, 1858, Aylett Family Papers, sec. 24, f. 28, Aylett Family Papers, VHS.

160. James McCarter to Rowland Gibson Hazard, Jan. 17, [1857], Rowland Gibson Hazard I Papers, 5.27, Rhode Island Historical Society (hereafter RIHS).

161. Bishop John England led the way among southern Catholics by insisting that the encyclical applied only to the trade. See John England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth on the Subject of Domestic Slavery* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1844).

162. Verot, *A Tract for the Times,* 10.

163. See Ronald T. Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971), 33–37, 25.

164. *Report of the Special Committee of the House of Representatives, of South Carolina, on So Much of the Message of His Excellency Gov. Jas. H. Adams as Relates to Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Columbia, SC: Steam Power Press Carolina Times, 1857), 4, 31.

165. Official Catholic theology rejected the race-based argument that God designed blacks for slavery. The Vatican official's critique of the pastoral is printed in Maria Genoino Caravaglios, "A Roman Critique of the Pro-Slavery Views of Bishop Martin of Natchitoches, Louisiana," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* (1972): 70–78. See also Maria Genoino Caravaglios, *The American Catholic Church and the Negro Problem in the XVIII–XIX Centuries,* edited by Ernest L. Unterkoefler (Charleston, SC: Caravaglios, 1974), 183–200; for American Catholics and slavery see John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: Norton, 2003), 43–68.

166. Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade,* 72.

167. Leonard W. Spratt, *The Foreign Slave Trade, the Source of Political Power, of Material Progress, of Social Integrity, and of Social Emancipation to the South* (Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press of Walker, Evans, 1858), 23.

168. *Report of the Special Committee,* 41–42.

169. Spratt, *The Foreign Slave Trade,* 23.

170. "The Middle Passage; or, Suffering of Slave and Free Immigrants," *De Bow's Review* 22, no. 6 (June 1857): 570–83, 579.

171. Quoted in Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade,* 82.

172. "Miscellaneous, Statistical, Etc.," *De Bow's Review* 25, no. 4 (Oct. 1858): 453–61, 458.

173. *Report of the Special Committee,* 41.

174. Stearns, *Notes on "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"* 71.

175. Spratt, *The Foreign Slave Trade,* 22.

176. Jefferson Davis to Samuel Cartwright, June 10, 1849, Samuel Cartwright papers, LSU.

177. Samuel Cartwright, "The Education, Labor, and Wealth of the South," in Elliott, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments,* 894.

178. [Edward B. Bryan], *Letters to the Southern People Concerning the Acts of Congress and the Treaties with Great Britain, in Relation to the African Slave Trade* (Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press of Walker, Evans, 1858), 13–14; Spratt, *The Foreign Slave Trade,* 22.

179. George Melville Weston, *The Progress of Slavery in the United States* (Washington, DC: Buell and Blanchard, 1858), 38.

180. John B. Adger, *A Review of Reports to the Legislature of S.C., on the Revival of the Slave Trade* (Columbia, SC: Steam-Power Press of R. W. Gibbes, 1858), 15.

181. See, e.g., [J. Johnson Pettigrew], *Report of the Minority of the Special Committee of Seven, to Whom Was Referred So Much of His Late Excellency's Message, No. 1, as Relates to Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Columbia, SC: Steam Power Press Carolina Times, 1857), 9.

182. Adger, *A Review of Reports to the Legislature of S.C., on the Revival of the Slave Trade,* 16, 35.

183. Wade Hampton, *Speech of Hon. Wade Hampton, on the Constitutionality of the Slave Trade Laws: Delivered in the Senate of South Carolina, December 10th, 1859* (Columbia, SC: Steam-Power Press of R. W. Gibbes, 1860), 18.

184. D. H. Hamilton to James Henry Hammond, Sept. 10, 1858, James Henry Hammond Papers, Reel 13 (v. 25), LC.

185. Verot, *A Tract for the Times,* 10.

186. Pettigrew, *Report of the Minority of the Special Committee of Seven,* 25–26.

187. Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All!* 200.

188. Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South,* 211.

189. Pettigrew, *Report of the Minority of the Special Committee of Seven,* 30.

190. Ibid., 28, 32.

191. John C. Hope to James Henry Hammond, Feb. 26, 1859, James Henry Hammond Papers, v. 26, LC; Verot, *A Tract for the Times,* 10.

192. "The Middle Passage; or, Suffering of Slave and Free Immigrants," 571.

Epilogue

1. Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," in *Abraham Lincoln: Complete Works,* vol. 2, edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay (New York: Century, 1894), 657.

2. Susan B. Anthony to Wendell Phillips, April 19, 1865, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(213).7, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter Houghton).

3. Albert Gallatin Browne to Wendell Phillips, Feb. 19, 1864, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(328), Houghton.

4. John Oliver to Wendell Phillips, July 6, 1866, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMsAm1953(942), Houghton.

5. "A Cruel Punishment," *Harper's Weekly,* July 28, 1866, 477.

6. Ibid.

7. Albert Gallatin Browne to Wendell Phillips, Sept. 17, 1865, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(328).10, Houghton.

8. Wendell Phillips to Augustin Cochin, July 15, 1867, bMsAm1953(1369), Houghton.

9. Undated, anonymous manuscript, p. 107, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(1584), Houghton.

10. Albert Gallatin Browne to Wendell Phillips, Sept. 17, 1865, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(328).10, Houghton.

11. Worthington G. Snethen to Wendell Phillips, Dec. 28, 1864, Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm(1138), Houghton.

12. For the contract as an emblem of freedom see Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21, 35.

13. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126–61.

14. "Progress at the South," *New-York Daily Tribune*, June 6, 186[5], clipping in Wendell Phillips Papers, bMSAm1953(398).3, Houghton.

15. William Taylor Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, June 29, 1865, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(685).2, Houghton.

16. Iveson L. Brookes to Samuel G. Lawlor, Jan. 20, 1862, Iveson L. Brookes Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

17. Kate Foster, Diary, July 4, 1863, Kate Foster Diary, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library.

18. William Taylor Palfrey to John Gorham Palfrey, Oct. 4, 1865, Palfrey Family Papers, bMSAm1704(685).22, Houghton.

19. "The Negro Was True," Nov. 4, 1904, transcript, George Llewellyn Christian Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

20. Henry M. Bullitt, "Uncle Jack," n.d. [post-1874], 42–46; Bullitt Family Papers, f. 130, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY (hereafter FHS); Henry M. Bullitt, manuscript, Sept. 14, 1906, 2–6, Bullitt Family Papers, f. 130, FHS.

21. "Mrs. Wm. C. Bullitt," unidentified news clipping, July 1879, Bullitt Family Papers, f. 282, FHS.

22. As an assistant professor at Jacksonville State Normal School, Nixon also recruited students to collect oral histories of Alabama slavery. See Sarah Newman Shouse, *Hillbilly Realist: Herman Clarence Nixon of Possum Trot* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 19–20. Shouse does not look at the responses analyzed below, however. For Nixon's contribution to *I'll Take My Stand* see "Whither Southern Economy?" in *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, by Twelve Southerners (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 176–200.

23. One response was from a former slave, who, in contrast to the other respondents, stressed that "a great many" owners had been "very cruel." See O. T. McCann to H. C. Nixon, Dec. 5, 1912, Responses to Questionnaire and Newspaper, LPR91, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (hereafter ADAH).

24. John Yarbrough to H. C. Nixon, Nov. 15, 1912, Responses, ADAH.

25. J. W. Winston to H. C. Nixon, Jan. 25, 1913, Responses, ADAH.

26. P. F. Mitchell to Mr. Brooks, March 28, 1913, Responses, ADAH.

27. M. T. Judge to H. C. Nixon, March 23, 1913, Responses, ADAH.

28. M. T. Judge to H. C. Nixon, [March 1913], Responses, ADAH.

29. James M. Davison to H. C. Nixon, May 7, 1913, Responses, ADAH.

30. J. W. Grayson to H. C. Nixon, April 4, 1913, Responses, ADAH.

31. See Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 120.

32. See Lewis Jacobs, *Rise of the American Film* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 175, quoted in Everett Carter, "Cultural History Written with Lightning: The Significance of *The Birth of a Nation*," *American Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (fall 1960): 347–57, 347.

33. Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Régime* (1918; repr., New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940), 306, 328–29.

34. For an early attack on the Phillips theory see Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

35. Steve Wilkins and Douglas Wilson, *Southern Slavery, as It Was* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996). The title (intentionally?) counters Theodore Dwight Weld's catalogue of cruelties, *American Slavery as It Is* (1839). See chap. 4.

36. Sean M. Quinlan and William Ramsey, "Southern Slavery as It Wasn't: Coming to Grips with Neo-Confederate Historical Misinformation," *Oklahoma City University Law Review* 30, no. 1 (2005), 3; available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=633361 (accessed June 1, 2005). A section was reprinted as "Let My People Stay," *Harper's Magazine,* June 2005, 24–25.

37. See Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, esp. 140–91.

38. As Robert Cover suggested, we cannot isolate the interpretation of a law from the cultural narratives (and moral worlds) that frame and lend meaning to those laws for a specific community. Cover explains, "No set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic, for each decalogue a scripture." See Robert M. Cover, "The Supreme Court 1982 Term—Forward: Nomos and Narrative," *Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 1 (1983): 4–68, 4.

39. See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 6–10.

40. See chap. 4; see also James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

41. For a cogent argument about the rhetoric of pain contributing to a language of the right to bodily integrity see Elizabeth B. Clark, " 'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (Sept. 1995): 463–93.

42. See Darryl Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Scott illustrates the various and competing uses of the image of the "damaged" black psyche. As he suggests, this rhetoric was dangerous; contempt is often the flip side of pity.

43. Susan Sontag notes that sympathizing with images of suffering allows us to declare our innocence and helplessness in the face of suffering, even when we are neither innocent nor helpless. See Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 102–3. As James Turner notes, humanitarianism's early stress on cruelty to animals helps explain the tendency toward "insubstantial sentimentalism" (Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, 139–40).

44. I do not suggest that invoking the language of human rights would cut through

our moral conundrums; historians and other scholars have suggested the complexities and ambiguities of the language of rights. Lynn Hunt, for example, points to a similar reliance on self-evidence in human-rights appeals. Rather, my point is that invoking humaneness is too often used to avoid difficult questions about the nature of our moral responsibilities to others. See Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007), 19–20, 26; and Kenneth Cmiel, "The Recent History of Human Rights," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (2004): 117–35.

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